


**Thumbnail Image:**





# Media Diplomacy and the Ongoing Armed Conflict in Ukraine <sup>[1]</sup>

Traditional and social media are considered to be public diplomacy instruments, with global media sometimes used by governments to carry out public diplomacy initiatives. Positive results depend both on a specific long-term strategy that is developed in relation to target audiences and on the credibility that audiences attribute to said media.

Collaborating with the media can contribute to a successful peacemaking process and, therefore, should not be overlooked by policymakers . This contribution toward peace can be provided by both international and local media. In the viewpoint of Ghasemi and Karimi, new media has also become a major factor for fostering peace.

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## Ukraine / Zelensky

Tara Sonenshine, Former U.S. Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, noted in a recent conversation how President Zelensky uses the media for public diplomacy, in communicating his wish for Ukrainian independence and freedom. Take, for instance, Ukraine's official posts on social media platforms such as X. The Ukrainian government has made use of social media throughout its armed conflict with Russia. In doing so, Ukraine has presented a model for how countries seeking to improve their public image, chiefly in wartime or other hard times, could use social media.

In the field of media diplomacy, for the sender, it is important to determine specific audiences and precisely send them messages via adequate communication channels. Current ICTs enable targeting the smallest segment of audiences: individuals.

It may be noteworthy that Russia recently banned several European media in response to the European Union's ban of Russian media. The New York Times also reported that journalists in Ukraine object to pressures exerted on their work. In reality, a State isn't always able to use the media to easily send a message to a foreign target audience, especially in the context of war. This is because it could be necessary to overcome censorship or applicable prohibitions in other countries, while managing to influence the media's agenda-setting process. The message can only influence the receiver if the latter actually receives it.

For the Ukrainian government, the Peace Summit, held in Switzerland on June 15 and 16, 2024, started off by serving to exert international pressure on Russia, in order to lead the

latter to negotiate peace with Ukraine. While this summit was not attended by the Russian Federation President, the day before its scheduled start, in an anticipatory effort, Putin laid out his conditions for peace with Ukraine. Those conditions were quickly rejected by Zelensky via Italian news channel SkyTG24. Said statements by Putin and Zelensky's immediate same-day reply constitute a sort of dialogue. To this end, we should point out the relevance of rhetoric as part of media diplomacy. It is vital for a sender to be able to influence the target audience.

During the summit, Zelensky and representatives from several countries were given the chance to globally disseminate messages, from Lucerne, through various world media outlets that sent their journalists there to cover the event. In the presence of reporters, Zelensky underscored joint efforts to put an end to the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict, leading to the establishment of a just peace. The presence of journalists at these kinds of events enable participating political leaders to send messages to both audiences of their countries and international audiences, as they seek to influence public opinion. This can be particularly important as support to decision-making by the governments of democratic States.

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