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To my son David.

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Abstract

This dissertation investigated the formation, projection, and reception of strategic narratives with the purpose of exploring and explaining how and in what ways soft power can be enacted via strategic narratives. Specifically, utilizing Miskimmon et al.'s (2014) concept of strategic narratives, this dissertation analyzed strategic narratives of Russia to answer the research questions of this exploratory study. The dissertation consisted of three empirical studies. The first study executed a qualitative analysis of the foundational foreign policy documents of Russia to identify the potentially embedded strategic narratives that can be used for projection. The second study conducted a content analysis of Russia's public diplomacy materials to understand what strategic narratives, identified at the level of narrative formation, were embedded in the media materials of two major Russia's public diplomacy outlets: *Russia Today* and *RIA Novosti (Sputnik)*. The third study analyzed the content of two U.S. elite newspapers, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post,* to identify whether any of Russia's strategic narratives reached the discursive media environment of the target state. The results from all three studies were then compared and analyzed further.

At the level of narrative formation, the study identified five major strategic narratives that Russia could potentially use for projection onto the target publics. At the level of narrative projection, the study found all five narratives present in the Russian public diplomacy efforts, with culture and policy dominating as a soft power source. The level of narrative salience within a story was positively correlated with the tone of the narrative during the projection stage. At the level of narrative reception, the study also found all five narratives present within the discursive environment of the target

state, with policy dominating as a soft power source. Yet, the level of narrative salience within a story was negatively correlated with the tone of the narrative during the reception stage.

These findings were further analyzed and synthesized to understand the process of the soft power enactment via strategic narratives. In general, the findings highlighted several observations. First, strategic narratives that are present at the level of narrative formation are also present at the level of narrative projection and narrative reception, although with varying degree of salience. Second, some strategic narratives at the level of projection and the level of reception exhibited a significant growth during the same period of time, indicating a time-bound need for strategic narratives. Third, strategic narratives' attributes, such as narrative salience within a story and narrative tone, differed between stages of narrative projection and narrative reception, with narratives being more neutral to positive at the projection and more neutral to negative at the reception. Fourth, speakers of strategic narratives also differed in several ways between stages, with Russian government officials dominating narrative projection and non-Russian government officials and public figures dominating narrative reception. Finally, sources of soft power referenced in strategic narratives at the level of narrative projection were referenced in a similar manner at the level of narrative reception, with the exception of one narrative, indicating that attributes/sources of soft power attraction can fluctuate and be re-framed during the transmission process.

Overall, the dissertation suggests that strategic narratives projected via public diplomacy efforts can be used as tools for the enactment of soft power when strategic narratives emphasize different soft power sources: policies, values, and culture. This

argument is based on the assumption that strategic narrative can survive the transmission between stages of narrative formation, narrative projection, and narrative reception. While this assumption has been confirmed by this dissertation, it was also demonstrated that the ability of strategic narratives to reach the discursive environment of the target country does not ensure narrative reception. This observation prompted a conceptualization of an intermediate stage between the narrative projection and narrative reception – narrative diffusion. The proposed diffusion stage captures the previously unexplained concern of how strategic narratives can be received at the stage of narrative reception.

The results of this exploratory research extend and clarify the work of Roselle et al. (2014) on the relationship between strategic narratives and soft power. By addressing the research problem, this dissertation contributes to our understanding of the relationship between soft power and strategic narratives and provides insights into the discursive nature of soft power, illustrating the phenomenon using the case of Russia. This study also elaborated on the contributions of public relations and public diplomacy to the process of soft power enactment.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The neoliberal view of the world as a global marketplace forced countries around the world to be engaged in strategic competition and country promotion, seeking to exert power and shape the world order (Dolea, 2015). This requires communicating about the policies and values in order for other countries to see the country's goals as legitimate. In other words, it requires soft power (Daly, 2016; Duanmu, 2014; Nye, 2008; Roselle et al., 2014).

The term soft power entered political discourse in the early 1990s, when Joseph Nye in his influential book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* coined the term. Academics, journalists, and political leaders around the world now use it frequently to describe nations' quest for a positive image. Numerous rankings of the world nations (Best Countries Index, The Good Country Index, Soft Power 30) demonstrate the importance of soft power's ability to attract and persuade, justifying spending on soft power-related programming, including public diplomacy programs (Hayden, 2012). To many, public diplomacy is the tool that helps foster soft power as well as the instrument for exerting it (Melissen, 2005).

The popular notions of public diplomacy, circulating in the media and government reports, often liken public diplomacy to related concepts of public relations, soft power, and even nation-branding (Dolea, 2015; Macnamara, 2012; Melissen, 2005; Zaharna et al., 2013). These three terms have often been used interchangeably to deal with the same problem of a country's image (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Dolea, 2015; Pamment, 2014). As a result, public diplomacy became a catch-all phrase for

describing how governments exploit communication technologies, including public relations, to exert soft power (Fitzpatrick, 2010).

Both scholars and practitioners have extensively discussed public diplomacy in the literature. Substantial gaps exist in understandings of public diplomacy when viewed from the perspective of different disciplines, namely international relations and public relations. According to Gilboa (2008), experts and practitioners in public diplomacy have often ignored relevant knowledge in communication and public relations literature, while communication and public relations scholars and practitioners ignored the relevant literature in international relations and diplomatic studies.

When public diplomacy is discussed within the domain of public relations, the similarities and differences between public diplomacy and public relations are frequently debated. In response to these debates and theoretical arguments several broad public relations approaches to public diplomacy have been introduced, including: 1) the mediated approach to public diplomacy that focuses on the country images (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2013; Kunzcik, 1997); 2) the relational approach to public diplomacy that emphasizes the value of relationships (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Yang, Klyueva, & Taylor, 2012); 3) the integrated approach to public diplomacy that argues for interdisciplinary nature of the concept (Golan, 2013), and 4) the network and collaborative approach to public diplomacy that focuses on social capital and soft power potential of networks (Yang & Taylor, 2014; Zaharna et al., 2013). These approaches largely emphasize the functional level of public diplomacy and its execution, highlighting strategies and tactics that can be most effective for achieving foreign policy goals. As Dolea (2015) explained, "the dominant approach in research falls into a functionalist paradigm since

it is meant to identify better instruments for crafting messages and to furnish solutions for improving the practice in general" (p. 278). To counter this prevalence of the functionalist perspective, public relations scholars also advocated for critical (Dolea, 2015) and cultural (Dutta-Bergman, 2006) examinations of public diplomacy.

Within the international relations literature, public diplomacy is often discussed in relation to soft power (Melissen, 2005; Nye, 2008) and some scholars suggest a soft power approach to public diplomacy (Melissen, 2005; Yang et al., 2012; Yang & Taylor, 2014). However, such an approach has not been clearly articulated considering that the above-mentioned public relations approaches to public diplomacy incorporate soft power in one way or the other. Soft power in the discussions of these approaches often serves as a unifying theme, particularly in relation to the outcomes of public diplomacy programming. As such, soft power frequently is treated as an instrument of public diplomacy and as an ad-hoc measure for its effectiveness (Hayden, 2012; Pamment, 2014; Rugh, 2009). For example, Yang and Taylor (2014) offered a soft power network approach that argues that networks create soft power through its structure, and thus stress the notion that governments with bigger, stronger networks acquire the type of (soft) power that translates into influence. In their example of Chinese soft power in network public diplomacy, soft power is treated as an outcome of network public diplomacy.

This chapter addresses the multitude of interpretations of public diplomacy and public relations as they relate to soft power and lays foundation for the understanding of how public diplomacy, public relations, and soft power are understood and used for the purpose of this dissertation research. It starts with an overview of the dominant

conceptualizations and interpretations of these concepts found in the literature. The discussion concludes with identifying the research problem addressed in this dissertation. Further, the chapter briefly outlines theoretical and methodological approaches and discusses the significance of the study for practice and theory development.

Conceptualizations of Public Diplomacy, Public Relations, and Soft Power

The varying definitions of public diplomacy suggest that the concept still lacks theoretical and conceptual clarity (Fitzpatrick, Fullerton, & Kendrick, 2013). While the multidisciplinary nature of public diplomacy opened doors for different disciplines to claim public diplomacy and to interpret it in its specific context (Gilboa, 2008; Macnamara, 2012), it also created an impression that "public diplomacy theory had entered a phase of the postmodern eclecticism" (Pamment, 2014, p. 53).

Although the term public diplomacy was not coined until 1965, the practice of public diplomacy is as old as the modern world (Bardos, 2000). Broadly defined as the "influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies," public diplomacy is a key part of the nation-states' survival (Association of Public Diplomacy Professionals, formerly USIA Alumni Association, 2016, para. 10). Yet, there are many more ways in which public diplomacy is being practiced, defined, and understood by scholars and practitioners. According to Fitzpatrick et al. (2013), public diplomacy does not have a generally accepted definition. Scholars working with public diplomacy are often focused on "establishing the variety of activities encompassed by public diplomacy and the actors involved in it" (Dolea, 2015, p. 277).

Traditional descriptions of public diplomacy often emphasize *government involvement*, "direct communication with foreign peoples with the aim of affecting their thinking and, ultimately, that of their governments" (Malone, 1985, p. 199). Another definition of public diplomacy describes it as "a government's process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies" (Tuch, 1990, p.3).

A common characteristic of public diplomacy highlighted in many definitions is the *foreign publics as target audience*. Waller (2007), for example, suggested that public diplomacy is "the art of communicating with foreign publics to influence international perceptions, attitudes and policies" (p. 19). Cull (2009) proposed to treat public diplomacy as an attempt by international actors "to manage the international environment through engagement with a foreign public" (p. 12). Nakamura and Weed (2009) argued that public diplomacy is "a term used to describe a government's efforts to conduct foreign policy and promote national interests through direct outreach and communication with the population of a foreign country" (p. i).

These definitions draw attention to yet another essential component of public diplomacy that is *the effect of its activities on foreign policy goals of the advocate country*. For example, Sharp (2005) suggested that "public diplomacy is the process by which direct relations with people in a country are pursued to advance the interests and extend the values of those being represented" (p. 106), and Frederick (1993) argued that public diplomacy is comprised of "activities, directed abroad in the fields of information, education, and culture, whose objective is to influence a foreign

government, by influencing its citizens" (p. 229). Thus, public diplomacy as a government communication activity is expected to yield results in the form of advancing national interests that are expressed in foreign policy.

Similarly, McDowell argued that *two crucial elements define the uniqueness and purpose of public diplomacy – government intention and government participation*. Without these crucial building blocks, "we are merely talking about the background noise of international communication" (McDowell, 2008, p. 8).

Consider the following observations by McDowell (2008) as illustrated in Figure 1. First, when government A communicates with government B, it conducts diplomacy in its traditional understanding (black arrow). For example, when the U.S. and Russia discussed framework on Syria's chemical weapons, most of the conversations happened behind closed doors (Smith-Park & Cohen, 2013).

Figure 1. Public Diplomacy and Government
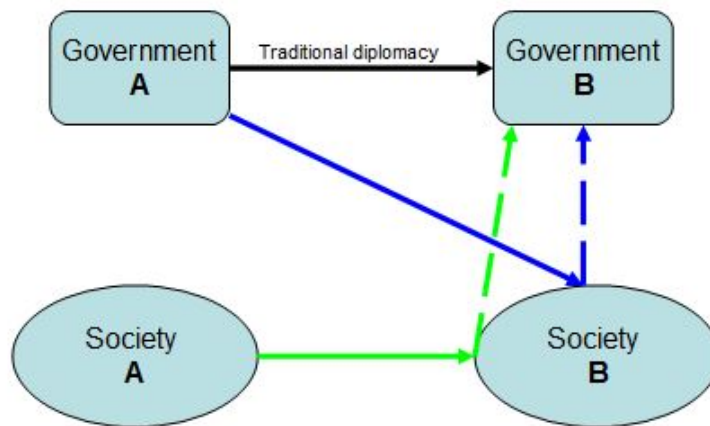
Second, when the government A communicates with the society B with the hope of influencing government B, it conducts public diplomacy that arguably may have attributes of propaganda (international broadcasting) and therefore is not entirely

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credible (McDowell, 2008; blue arrows). For example, created in the aftermath of 9/11 to combat anti-American moods in the Middle East, the U.S. government funded Arab-language international broadcaster Al-Hurra (a U.S. public diplomacy tool) still struggles with viewership and ratings (Dabbous & Nasser, 2009). Third, when society A directly communicates with society B, it contributes to the general flow of international communication. For example, a tour of the Russian ballet troupe in the United States is a commercial endeavor with a potential for cultural impact, or a professional journalists training is an educational endeavor with a potential for political impact (Figure 1, green arrows).

According to McDowell (2008), all of these activities can happen in the absence of the government, but "*they become public diplomacy only when they are part of an overall plan conceived by (or at least agreed to by) government and are directed at a particular goal*" (p. 10). Furthermore, McDowell (2008) argued that public diplomacy is most successful when black, green, and blue arrows are coordinated [by the government] with the goal of supporting foreign policy goals. An example of such cooperation between state and non-state actors, government and civil society, can be the congressionally mandated NGOs. The National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the Asia Foundation, the East West Center at the University of Hawaii, and the Eisenhower Exchange Fellowship Program continue to receive government funding to perform work in support of U.S. foreign policy goals (Nakamura & Weed, 2009). These NGOs "seek to develop long-term relationships and to improve foreign populations' understanding of and attitudes toward the United States" (Nakamura & Weed, 2009, p. 32).

Such description of public diplomacy brings a more contemporary understanding of public diplomacy to the forefront. What some scholars call *new* public diplomacy (Melissen, 2005), includes *non-government entities* and *non-state actors* as well. Public relations scholars Signitzer and Coombs (1992) were among the first to observe the importance of non-state actors in public diplomacy, characterizing public diplomacy as "the way in which both government and private individuals and groups influence directly or indirectly those public attitudes and opinions which bear directly on another government's foreign policy decisions" (p. 138). This has become a unifying theme between public relations and public diplomacy.

As an evolving practice, public diplomacy increasingly resembles modern understanding of public relations, both conceptually and practically. For example, Szondi (2009) conceptualized public diplomacy as international public relations with relationship management being the central concept. He argued that many scholars and practitioners "dismiss or misunderstand public relations", but "they tend to use its terminology and key concepts, thus reinventing the wheel" (p. 28).

The previous research, reviews of literature and comparisons of public diplomacy and public relations terms demonstrated the functional and practical equivalency of public diplomacy and public relations (Fitzpatrick et al., 2013; L'Etang, 1996; Signitzer & Wamser, 2006). According to Signitzer and Wamser (2006), both public relations and public diplomacy are strategic communication functions of the government. The research by Fitzpatrick et al. (2013) revealed that there is a "significant potential for public relations concepts and practices to inform thinking and practices in public diplomacy" (p. 1).

To summarize, public diplomacy definitions often attribute its function to national governments, treat publics of foreign countries as target audiences, assume the involvement of both state and non-state actors in public diplomacy activities, argue that public diplomacy activities affect foreign policy, and often see the accomplishment of foreign policy goals as a strategic purpose of public diplomacy. The many descriptions of public diplomacy frequently relate it to soft power and liken it to public relations, highlighting the idea that "public diplomacy is about using available *means to influence* the actions of foreign populations" with a strategic goal of *accomplishing foreign policy objectives* (Fisher, 2008, p. 130).

For the above reasons, in this dissertation *public diplomacy is defined as a strategic public relations function of the government with the goal of communicating and explaining foreign policy* of a country to global publics through available means of influence, including but not limited to strategic planning and execution of informational, cultural and educational programming, as well as international development projects by state and non-state actors.

While communication scholars regard public diplomacy as being in alignment with theories, principles and strategies of public relations, international relations scholars view public diplomacy more than a communication tool (Nye, 2004). In international relations, public diplomacy is often regarded as a major tool to promote soft power, which considers everything (popular culture, fashion, sports, news, Internet, democracy, etc.) to have an impact on foreign policy and national security as well as on trade, tourism and other national interests.

In recent years, more and more public diplomacy conceptualizations started to include soft power (Macnamara, 2012). Kalin (2011) defined public diplomacy as "a platform for the implementation of soft power" (p. 7). Williams (2009) argued that public diplomacy is "an integral component of what Joseph Nye termed 'soft power' or the 'ability to attract others by the legitimacy of policies and values that underlie them'" (p. 218). Zhang (2013) simplified Nye's notion of soft power to simply likening it to public diplomacy. Sun (2008) suggested that "public diplomacy as part of international political marketing is a method in the creation of soft power, as well as, in the application of soft power" (p. 165). According to Pamment (2014), public diplomacy is a practice of communication interventions into "foreign policy issues by actively utilizing soft power assets" (p. 52).

In general, public relations, public diplomacy, and soft power are the three terms that often are used interchangeably to address questions associated with country image (Pamment, 2014). Some scholars have also thrown the concept of nation branding into the mix under the umbrella term of country promotion (Anholt, 2010; Dolea, 2015). As a result, public diplomacy frequently refers to the governments' exploitation of communication tools, including public relations, to exercise soft power (Fitzpatrick, 2010).

The association among concepts of public diplomacy, public relations, and soft power has been the subject of examination (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Dolea, 2015; Fitzpatrick et al., 2013; Pamment, 2014), and is often rationalized by the functional equivalency between public relations and public diplomacy (L'Etang, 2008), and the need for public diplomacy's justification through soft power (Hayden, 2012).

Specifically, the adoption of public relations tools for public diplomacy campaign design included the embracing of "measurable objectives" as well as "measurement by objective," bringing the issue of practicality and evaluation to the forefront of the discussions about public diplomacy (Pamment, 2014). For this reason, soft power became a convenient tool for justifying public diplomacy spending, being treated as a potential outcome of public diplomacy programs and as an ad-hoc measure of public diplomacy success (Hayden, 2012; Fitzpatrick, 2013; Pamment, 2014).

Despite the proliferation of public diplomacy approaches and recurrent debates about the role of soft power in public diplomacy, the understanding of soft power as it relates to public diplomacy and how it operates is still lacking. An extensive reading of the literature in international relations, public relations, and public diplomacy indicated that the concept of soft power is an overarching theme that provides a meaningful link between public diplomacy as a domain of international relations and public diplomacy as a domain of public relations. This presents a conceptual problem but also an opportunity to examine the relationship between soft power and public diplomacy further. The understanding of soft power from a communication perspective, specifically through public diplomacy as a strategic public relations function of the government, is the focus of this dissertation.

Problem Statement

Soft power is central to the understanding of international communication and international relations today. Many scholars and practitioners treat soft power as an instrument of public diplomacy – a potential tool for exerting political influence that stems from cultural influence and from publics' interest in the images of nations and

identities that it produces (Solomon, 2014). Soft power is also often discussed as an instrument or an outcome of public diplomacy activities and is frequently used as a justification for public diplomacy spending (Hayden, 2012). It has become a measure of its success or failure.

Although soft power received significant attention in the scholarly literature and is used as a catchphrase for politicians and journalists, nevertheless the research explaining how the influence of soft power takes places and how one can enact the soft power influence is rather limited. In addition, the discussions of leveraging soft power are scarce in general and lack clear suggestions for practitioners of how to achieve it. While the literature discusses how soft power comes to be, its sources and potential modi operandi, the literature does not address the question such as: when an actor wants to enact (project, use, or wield) its soft power, how is it accomplished? Therefore, this dissertation attempts to address the question of *how one leverages soft power attraction for strategic outcomes*.

In light of the limited research on how to leverage soft power and the lack of clear suggestions for practitioners for how to achieve it, this dissertation strives to address the following research problem: how and in what way soft power influence can be communicated and/or enacted, specifically via strategic narratives projected through public diplomacy? Further, while there is a growing body of literature on strategic narrative in international relations (Miskimmon et al., 2014; Roselle et al., 2014; Zaharna, 2016), to date, there are no comprehensive studies that examine the development of strategic narratives from their formation to projection to reception specifically to examine the potential of soft power enactment.

This dissertation utilized the Miskimmon et al.'s (2014) concept of strategic narratives and proposed to think about strategic narratives as tools for the enactment of soft power. Specifically, this dissertation attempted to address the identified problem by examining the strategic narratives of Russia, developed and used in recent years, to explore the potential of strategic narrative to enact soft power.

By addressing the stated research problem, this dissertation contributes to an overall understanding of the relationship between soft power and strategic narratives and provides insights about the fluid nature of soft power. In addition, using the Russian Federation as a case study, this dissertation helps to illustrate in what way strategic narratives help enact soft power. This study also elaborates on the contributions of public relations and public diplomacy to the process of soft power enactment. The next section offers context for the study of public diplomacy and soft power using the example of Russia as an advocate state and the United States as the target state.

Background for the Study: Public Diplomacy, Russia, and the United States

Traditionally, public diplomacy was used by a government against another government in hostile relationships to accomplish long-term results in foreign societies (Gilboa, 1998), and initially was a euphemism for propaganda (Signitzer & Coombs, 1992). Public diplomacy became a substantial area of practice during the Cold War, and throughout the twentieth century was dominated by campaigns to garner ideological support (Bardos, 2000; Cull, 2009; Gilboa, 2008). Being a child of the Cold War, public diplomacy has been widely utilized in the battle for hearts and minds between two superpowers of the twentieth century – the Soviet Union and the United States (Staar, 1986).

The practice of public diplomacy has been mastered during a half-century history of the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), which made a great contribution to the integration of public diplomacy into the foreign policy (Bardos, 2000). According to Wang (2006), during the Cold War the U.S. public diplomacy included covert psychological war operations run by CIA and informational operations run by USIA. The USIA's objectives were later expanded to serve foreign policy goals, such as influencing public attitudes abroad and advising the President. As a result, the U.S. public diplomacy became an ad hoc instrument of American foreign policy and has been struggling to find its role within the foreign affairs apparatus as a strategic policy function versus merely as a "mouthpiece" of American foreign policy (Snow, 2009).

The end of the Cold War raised the question of USIA's relevance and the role of public diplomacy. In 1997, USIA ceased its existence and the Department of State assumed the responsibilities for public diplomacy programs. A new phase in the development of public diplomacy research started after the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Snow, 2009).

In the aftermath of 9/11, both public diplomacy scholars and practitioners became increasingly concerned with the United States' image in the Arab and Muslim countries. Tools of public diplomacy, temporarily abandoned after the victory of the Cold War, came in demand again when the *war on terror* became a new target of public diplomacy efforts (Snow & Taylor, 2006). These renewed public diplomacy efforts were criticized for using a Cold War approach to a very different problem - terrorism and anti-Americanism (Snow & Taylor, 2006).

As the attention of public diplomacy scholars and practitioners turned to the issues of the war on terror and the Muslim world, Russia and the Russian people were omitted from the list of important target audiences for American public diplomacy efforts (Seib, 2010). According to Seib (2010), there is no articulated U.S. public diplomacy policy toward Russia. In fact, the primary instrument of the American public diplomacy during the Cold War, the *Voice of America*, seized its Russian-language broadcasting in 2008 (Kiel, 2008). The closure of the *Voice of America* broadcasting in Russia was done following the American policy to put an emphasis on public diplomacy efforts in the Muslim world and to free up funds for recently created Arab-language broadcasting company *Al-Hurra* (Kiel, 2008). Currently, the Russian service of the *Voice of America* provides information online only, while the Russian radio station *Voice of Russia* began the English-language broadcasting in the United States (Tlisova, 2011).

To the contrary, Russia has been actively building its information assets for the last 15 years. Although the term public diplomacy reflects a relatively new field of practice and study in Russia, its earlier form of propaganda has historically been an intrinsic part of the Soviet foreign service, working as a propaganda device of the Soviet state, its voice and face abroad through overseas embassies and ambassadors (Kenez, 1985). Some Western scholars argued that public diplomacy is not a very appropriate term for the Soviet efforts in this field (Staar, 1986; Wettig, 1986). According to Wettig (1986), Soviet propaganda was often treated as a political action, which meant "mobilizing, organizing, and as much as possible, controlling political forces in Western societies in order to exploit them for the attainment of definite Soviet

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purposes" (p. 275). In contrast with the U.S. public diplomacy, which promoted policies after they were publicly discussed and agreed upon, Soviet propaganda was an essential part of the foreign policy from its very inception (Wettig, 1986).

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the foreign policy conception of the newly created Russian Federation had two important communication objectives to achieve: to dissolve the Soviet-era stereotypes and to promote the new image of democratic Russia (Feklyunina, 2008). However, public diplomacy efforts were stagnated by persistent and reoccurring political and economic problems that Russia faced in the 1990s. According to Finn (2008), despite the progression toward democratization and modernization, it has been increasingly hard to create an image of Russia as "a country where the economy is booming and democracy is developing" (para. 5).

The turn of the 21st century marked the new beginning for the Russian public diplomacy. After a decade of political and economic instability, the interest of Russia in public diplomacy was revived (Astakhov, 2008). Gradually, Russia has been building its strategic communications structure, integrating and centralizing its information services, bringing it under government control and growing capacity for effective public diplomacy outreach both in the near abroad and the West (Hayden, 2017). Russian language and culture became central elements of Russia's strategic public diplomacy efforts (Klyueva & Tsetsura, 2015).

In recent years, Russia has rediscovered public diplomacy as means to cope with the *image problem* and a way to re-establish country's presence in the international arena. Realizing that it has an unfavorable reputation worldwide, Russia has

implemented many efforts to project a more positive image with the primary goal to diminish traditional stereotypes of Russia and negative perceptions (Simons, 2011). In 2005, Kremlin initiated an extensive public diplomacy campaign to improve Russia's image abroad (Orttung, 2010). The arsenal of tools for the newly launched public diplomacy efforts ranged from traditional international broadcasting to sophisticated efforts that included lobbying in the United States, cultural and educational exchanges, and counseling services from the biggest public relations firms, such as *Ketchum* and its affiliates (Feklyunina, 2008; Orttung, 2010).

According to Finn (2008), since 2005 Kremlin has been investing millions of dollars into various forms of public diplomacy, together with "new media ventures to target international audiences; foundations to promote Russian language and culture around the world; conferences to charm Western opinion-makers; and nongovernmental organizations that are setting up shops in Western capitals to scrutinize the failings of Western democracy" (para. 6). These new media ventures included the launch in 2005 of an international broadcasting company, *Russia Today*, and the formation of an integrated information agency with the same name in 2013, comprised of the former news service *RIA Novosti* and radio *Voice of Russia* (Toor, 2013). Among other established public diplomacy institutions was the New York-based Institute for Democracy and Cooperation (Osipovich, 2008), D.C.-based Center on Global Interests (Shitov, 2013), Gorchakov Fund for Public Diplomacy (Burlinova, 2013) and Russkiy Mir Foundation (Voice of Russia, 2007). According to Avgerinos (2009), these efforts produced mixed results and did not improve Russia's image abroad significantly, partially due to the fact that the existing Russian public diplomacy policy was

characterized by inconsistent government rhetoric and a lack of clear and coherent strategy.

Rawnsley (2015) investigated the capacity of Russia's international broadcaster *Russia Today* as an instrument of public diplomacy and observed that the Russian government's mouthpiece did not necessarily dedicate its airtime to remedy negative perceptions of Russia but rather focused on providing an alternative coverage of political and social events in the United States, allowing to grow its audiences quickly. Rawnsley (2015) argued that presenting itself as *alternative* or different from the U.S. media, *Russia Today* diminished its credibility and strengthened the perception of it being a propaganda machine.

Kiseleva (2015) argued that the Russian public diplomacy efforts are connected to the need and desire of Russia to establish itself as a recognized soft power state. She postulated that the notion of soft power attracts Russian political elites seeking status recognition and influence in the international system. According to Kiseleva (2015), when the recognition is not granted, Russia falls back on countervailing discourse ascribing itself a great power status in opposition to the West. Dougherty (2013) explained:

> Russia, as yet unable to define its own values, takes an "oppositional" approach to soft power, seeking to improve Russia's image by undermining the narrative projected by the United States. To accomplish this goal, Russia does not need to carry out a full frontal assault on Western values; it can simply "relativize" the values promoted by the West (p. 96).

Sergunin and Karabeshkin (2015) observed that Russia has two key interests in implementing a soft power strategy: 1) fostering economic, political and socio-cultural integration in the post-Soviet space; and 2) improving its international image. Analyzing Russia's soft power approach, they observed that Russia's soft power strategies go beyond public diplomacy and are often rooted in Russia's hard power. For example, often the socio-political integration of the post-Soviet countries implies securing the position of local regimes through financial and military resources (Sergunin & Karabeshkin, 2015).

Importantly, most recent research on Russia's public diplomacy and Russia's soft power has been conducted in the context of Russia's international actions, specifically Russian involvement in the Ukrainian crisis. In 2014, under the pretext of the right for self-determination, Russia had annexed a Crimean peninsula, a Russian-speaking autonomous region of Ukraine (Biersack & O'lear, 2014). Arguably, this action was in response to the Euromaidan protest movement and ousting of the pro-Russian president of Ukraine. Biersack and O'lear (2014) suggested two key factors for annexing Crimea by Russia – control of the Russian Black Sea Fleet based in Crimea and some newly discovered energy potential of the Black Sea that lead to territorial claims. In March of 2014, the Russian government deployed its unmarked troops to conduct a secessionist referendum that prompted Russia's incorporation of Crimea into its territory. Biersack & O'lear (2014) found that by appealing to Russia's geopolitical and historical imaginations of Crimea and the sense of historical injustice, the Russian government was able to disseminate narratives justifying the annexation of Crimea successfully.

Examining the Ukrainian counter-narratives of the time, Hayden (2017) argued that most of the efforts were directed toward managing the narratives around Russia's involvement in Ukraine. The United States attempted to contest Russia's narrative on the Ukrainian conflict but with a limited degree of success as Russia's media monopoly has been strongly cemented in the Russian-speaking regions of Ukraine, where narrative often emphasized the rights of ethnic minorities. According to Hayden (2017), the U.S. actions countering the Russian narrative were more about the de-legitimizing Russia's portrayal of events (e.g. demonstrating Russia's fake news) than about providing a competing narrative. Russian international broadcaster *Russia Today* and information agency *RIA Novosti* played a critical role in amplifying the legitimacy of Russia's actions and policy in Ukraine (Richter, 2014).

The presented background sets the stage for the study of the strategic narratives of Russia projected via its public diplomacy efforts. The situation provides a context for the timeline identified for the purpose of this study and puts in perspective the findings of this dissertation. The next section provides a brief overview of the theoretical and methodological approaches used in this study.

Theoretical and Methodological Approaches

This dissertation utilized a narrative approach to communication phenomena of public diplomacy and soft power as its overarching theoretical framework. The narrative approach to communication phenomena questions simplified understandings of communication processes that separate communication and behaviors (communication is behavior) and ponders on the general issue of *what happens when humans communicate* (Maines, 1993). There are several assumptions to the narrative

approach (Martin, 1986). First, narratives are pervasive and present in many strides of our lives as narratives inform our understanding of events and the world (Kent, 2015). Second, narratives are a form of human behavior and can be characterized as social acts, when narratives are treated as the rhetorical movement of language and writing through time (Dolby-Stahl, 1989). Third, narratives are collective processes pertained to representations of facts and are frequently political because they serve as a framework for interpretations of events (Maines, 1993).

Scholarly work on the narrative approach embraces numerous theoretical approaches from different disciplines, including communication theory, international relations, and sociology. For the purpose of this study, a framework on strategic narratives proposed by international relations scholars Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle (2014) was utilized. Miskimmon et al. (2014) proposed to think about strategic narratives as a way to understand soft power. They defined strategic narratives as an instrument for political actors to change the discursive environment in which they operate. Particularly, Miskimmon et al. (2014) argued that narratives about international actors and states structure expectations about behaviors of certain actors within the international system, and by doing so exert power. However, the abilities of strategic narratives to survive the transmission process from formation and reception are not examined or tested in the existing literature. There is also a lack of research to inform our understanding of the relationship between strategic narratives and soft power. In addition, there are no comprehensive studies that examine and trace strategic narratives from formation to projection to reception. This dissertation aims to close these gaps.

Examining soft power through the lenses of strategic narratives delivered via public diplomacy allows one to understand better how shared meaning and understanding of a policy or issue comes to be and how it influences the attractiveness and soft power of a country. Signitzer (2008) found that in fact public relations plays an important role in foreign policy by building and cultivating relationships, researching and scanning environments, building communities around a foreign policy issue, facilitating dialogue and socializing foreign policies.

Specifically, this dissertation examined the strategic narratives of Russia, developed and used in the recent years to explore the potential of strategic narrative to enact soft power. Russia has been noted for its increased activity of information dissemination and narrative projection in recent years, specifically to influence the arena of international relations and sway global view of Russia in its favor (Saari, 2014). Russian public diplomacy efforts were even noted in the Intelligence Community Assessment (ICA) report as influential. "Russia's state-run propaganda machine— comprised of its domestic media apparatus, outlets targeting global audiences such as RT and Sputnik, and a network of quasi-government trolls—contributed to the influence campaign by serving as a platform for Kremlin messaging to Russian and international audiences," report states (ICA, 2017, p. 3). For this reason, strategic narratives of Russia can serve as a good case study and suitable testing grounds for ideas put forward in this dissertation.

To satisfy the needs of this exploratory study, the dissertation developed a three-level, multi-method study design that allowed investigating strategic narratives independently at each stage of development. Strategic narratives were investigated in a

consecutive order starting with a qualitative analysis of narrative formation, content

analysis of narrative projection, content analysis of narrative reception, and comparative

analysis of findings across all stages of narrative development.

Goal of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation was to investigate the formation, projection, and

reception of strategic narratives used by the Russian Federation in recent years and by

doing so explore and explain how and in what ways soft power can be enacted via

strategic narratives. In general, using the case of the Russian Federation, the dissertation

strove to contribute to our understanding of the relationship between strategic narratives

and soft power, and how the enactment of soft power does or does not take place.

The results of the study provided insights into the process of soft power

enactment. The empirical part of this dissertation explored and described how Russia

uses strategic narratives, informed by the available soft power sources, and in what

ways these sources are incorporated into specific strategic narratives of the Russian

Federation.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is in its contribution to our understanding of how

soft power can be enacted. Many scholars and practitioners discuss soft power in

relation to public diplomacy, often suggesting using soft power to enhance the

achievement of political goals by nation states via public diplomacy and public relations

(Hayden, 2012; Yang & Taylor, 2014). However, the understanding of the process of

soft power enactment and how exactly soft power can be leveraged for political or any

other kind of influence is limited and often lacking. This dissertation adds to the

discussion of soft power understanding and provides different ways of thinking about it. Such knowledge will be relevant for both scholars and practitioners. In addition, this research extends and clarifies the work of Miskimmon et al. (2014) on the relationship between strategic narratives and soft power. The findings of this study also lay foundation for future directions in research on strategic narratives and theoretical development of the field.

Implications of the Study for Theory and Practice

This dissertation contributes to theory development by examining and explaining how strategic narratives as power resources operate and how soft power can be enacted. Through examination of strategic narratives at different levels, this study demonstrated the opportunities and limits of strategic narratives projected via public diplomacy in enacting soft power.

In addition, the dissertation addressed the role and relationship between the concepts of public relations, public diplomacy and soft power, propelling public relations theory development by extension. While strategic narratives address the formation, projection, diffusion, and reception of ideas in the international system, it is through the functional and technical affordances of public relations and public diplomacy that strategic narratives are able to enact soft power and possibly to convert soft power into influence.

Theoretical Contribution

The dissertation addresses the role and relationship between the concepts of public relations, public diplomacy, and soft power, thus propelling the development of public relations theory. First, through a meta-analysis of the literature, this dissertation

contributes further to the understanding of public diplomacy as a strategic public

relations function of the government by crystallizing public relations approaches to

public diplomacy, defining theoretical contributions of public relations to the public

diplomacy thought, and demonstrating their conceptual convergence. Second, by

examining strategic narratives of public diplomacy, this dissertation extends public

relations knowledge on the conceptualization and utilization of the strategic narratives

in strategic communication, suggesting most appropriate applications of the public

relations approaches to public diplomacy at different stages of the strategic narratives'

development.

The findings of this dissertation also provide a theoretical basis for the problem

of soft power enactment via strategic narratives, demonstrating the process of strategic

narrative development through stages and defining the discursive nature of soft power,

created and maintained by strategic narratives. Therefore, the primary theoretical

contribution of this dissertation consists in contributing to our understanding of how

soft power operates. Many scholars and practitioners discuss soft power in relation to

public diplomacy, often suggesting using soft power to enhance the achievement of

political goals by nation states. The discussion of how soft power can be utilized or

wielded for political or any other kind of influence is rather eclectic. This dissertation

adds to the discussion of soft power instrumentalization. Such knowledge will be

relevant for both scholars and practitioners.

In addition, this research extends the work of Miskimmon et al. (2014) on

strategic narratives and soft power by proposing an intermediate stage in the process of

strategic narratives' development and offering a conceptual model that attempts to

explain the soft power enactment via strategic narratives. The proposed research attempts to explain the role of strategic narratives in soft power. By examining a case of Russia's strategic narratives, this research builds toward conceptualization of the soft power enactment process that positions soft power as a discursive environment, constructed by strategic narratives of the advocate state. Particularly, the dissertation submits that public relations and public diplomacy shape the soft power environment via strategic narratives.

Practical Application

The results of the study informed a conceptual framework and contributed to our understanding of the relationship between strategic narratives and soft power. Specifically on the practical level, the research demonstrated, to extent possible, how and when the influence of soft power does or does not take place. The empirical part of this dissertation explored and described how Russia deploys strategic narratives derived from its soft power sources, over time and how and in what shape these strategic narratives were able to reach the discursive environment of the target state.

This chapter has established the need and purpose for the present study, summarized its research problems and objectives, and presented theoretical and practical implications. The next chapter reviews selected literature representing the extant knowledge on soft power, public diplomacy, and related concepts.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This dissertation explores the understanding of soft power as it relates to public diplomacy, a subfield of public relations, by introducing the notion of strategic narratives. Utilizing the dominant view of public relations as strategic management of communication and relationships between organizations and its publics (Van Dyke & Vercic, 2009), public relations and public diplomacy are treated in this dissertation as strategic communication functions, examined from the perspective of the organization (government in this case). In what follows, the chapter reviews and discusses the existing literature on the intersection of public relations, public diplomacy, and soft power. With an assumption in mind that public diplomacy, public relations, and soft power are distinct concepts that share a symbiotic relationship, the first section of the chapter examines the intersections of public relations and public diplomacy by reviewing and analyzing literature and identifying several approaches to public diplomacy informed by the public relations scholarship.

The second section of the chapter problematizes and elaborates on the often taken for granted link between public diplomacy and soft power. In addressing the core assumptions of soft power and public diplomacy, the dissertation proposes to conceptualize and treat soft power as a discursive environment, constructed via strategic narratives.

In the third section, the chapter introduces scholarly work on strategic narratives that allows operationalizing the soft power environment as created and maintained by mediated strategic narratives and their projection onto the target publics. These mediated strategic narratives are being produced and projected by state and nonstate

actors using tools such as public diplomacy and public relations. The chapter concludes with a summary of gaps in the literature that inform the formulation of research questions and research design.

Public Relations and the Study of Public Diplomacy

The study of public diplomacy has a considerable track record in the public relations scholarship. Ever since Signitzer and Coombs (1992) observed a consistent convergence between two fields, public relations researchers embarked on a journey to integrate concepts from the two seemingly disparate disciplines and to move public diplomacy field forward. The significant scholarly attention, devoted to understanding the level of convergence and similarities between public diplomacy and public relations, facilitated the emergence of several broad approaches to public diplomacy introduced within the public relations scholarship (Fitzpatrick et al., 2013; Gilboa, 2008; Golan & Yang, 2014; Signitzer & Coombs, 1992; Signitzer & Wamser, 2006; Wang & Chang, 2004; Zaharna et al., 2013).

Analyzing public diplomacy related concepts, Melissen (2005) found that public diplomacy's modus operandi is remarkably similar to the public relations approach in the use of strategies to reach foreign publics. When traditional public relations strategies and tactics target foreign publics, two concepts are most frequently used – public diplomacy and international public relations (Golan & Yang, 2014). According to Golan and Yang (2014), international public relations could be understood as the communication management function on the global scene. Analogously, public diplomacy deals with the management of communication on a global scale among multiple stakeholders (Golan & Yang, 2014).

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While one may easily discover striking similarities when examining public diplomacy and public relations definitions, identifying conceptual differences may be harder (Fitzpatrick et al., 2013). It can be argued, however, that the main distinctive characteristic of the international public relations and public diplomacy concepts is that one is initiated by a government and another by a multinational corporation (Kunzcik, 1997; Signitzer & Wamser, 2006).

According to Wakefield (2008), there are two defining characteristics of the international public relations that distinguish this practice from other public relations practices: 1) location of the institution, organization, or government and 2) publics with which the relationships are being built. In like manner, Wilcox, Cameron, Ault, and Agee (2007) defined international public relations as "the planned and organized effort of a company, institution or government to establish mutually beneficial relations with the publics of other nations" (p. 516). Signitzer and Wamser (2006) suggested that public diplomacy should be treated as a governmental public relations function, specifying that a national government virtually always initiates it, yet it can be executed by both state and non-state actors. Meanwhile, international public relations can be initiated and performed both by a government and a multinational corporation (Kunzcik, 1997; Wakefield, 2008).

Analyzing differences in traditional definitions of public diplomacy and public relations, Wang (2006) concluded that the difference mainly lies in the types of actors involved. Traditional definitions of public diplomacy (Malone, 1985; Tuch, 1990) suggest that the key actors in public diplomacy initiatives are governments and other state actors, whereas for international public relations main actors involve both state and

nonstate actors, such as multinational corporations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and even inter-governmental organizations (INGOs). At the same time, Gilboa (2008) argued that with the advance of communication technology and public relations and public diplomacy tools, the basic concept of public diplomacy has evolved to include both state and nonstate actors. With such diverse definitions, it becomes increasingly hard to distinguish between international public relations and public diplomacy.

While questions regarding the perceptual intersections between public diplomacy and public relations still exist, the debates surrounding this discussion propelled the development of several public relations perspectives on public diplomacy and allowed to reconcile some of the questions of convergence. Notably, the infusion of public relations theories into public diplomacy scholarship helped crystallize such public relations approaches to public diplomacy as mediated approach (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2013; Entman, 2008; Gilboa, 2006; Golan & Caroll, 2012; Kunzcik, 1997), relational approach (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Yang et al., 2012), networked and collaborative approaches (Zaharna et al., 2013), and integrated approach to public diplomacy (Golan, 2013). In what follows, the section discusses four public relations approaches to public diplomacy with the purpose of identifying gaps and future directions for public diplomacy research within the field of public relations.

Mediated Approach to Public Diplomacy

A mediated approach to public diplomacy has been a predominant one throughout the 20th century and had its roots in the study of images of nations and image cultivation (Kunczik, 1997). It is based on the notion that governments attempt to

cultivate certain images of their countries using strategies and tactics offered by public relations (Kunzick, 1997; Sheafer & Gabay, 2009; Yang et al., 2012).

Kenneth Boulding described the importance and power of image in meaning creation in his book, *The image: Knowledge in life and society*. He explained the image as "what I believe to be true, my subjective knowledge that largely governs my behavior" (Boulding, 1956, p. 6). Images, according to him, are created from messages coming from family, friends, experiences, and media. The message consists of structured experiences, and its meaning represents the change that it produces in the image. Therefore, according to Boulding, individual's behavior depends on the image and the meaning that a person draws from that image. As the image altered so is the behavior. Boulding also suggested that different images are subjected to a different degree of alteration, with some being resistant to change. He argued that when a message gets in contact with an image, the image may remain unaffected; the image may change in a distinct way – clarified or modified; or the image may change in a drastic way. Boulding's conception of the image, therefore, provided a lens for many perspectives in the study of image cultivation.

According to Luther (2002), national images can determine and govern both the individual and institutional attitudes and behavior toward a nation and thus affect the course of governmental relationships and foreign policy. That is why nations spend resources on cultivating their image. Hayden (2012) argued that image cultivation amplifies broader efforts to conduct public diplomacy, as public diplomacy often uses a strategy of image management and strategic communication.

As Golan and Yang (2014) pointed out, mediated public diplomacy focuses on strategic management of communication content and coverage of international affairs in pursuit of a favorable image of the nation. This managed communication content caters to the pre-existing collection of shared national images, created and reproduced by language and discourse (Boulding, 1956; Yang et al., 2012). Therefore, managing communication content via media is important because it allows for effective image cultivation through individual perceptions of other nations created by personal experiences and mediated messages. Such cultivated image serves as a frame of reference for people judging about other countries (Kunczik, 1997; Yang et al., 2012).

In addition to image cultivation that occurs via individual perceptions, created by personal experiences and mediated messages, it is equally important to consider not only the content of communication but also attributes of a country's image such as its political and economic characteristics, as well as the existing identity markers of the nation. The political and economic structures of nations can significantly influence their image (and its perception) either in a positive or negative way (Kunzcik, 1997; Luther, 2002). Consequently, positive changes in political structures and economic conditions of a nation result in the positive changes of that nation's image (Luther, 2002).

National identity similarly plays a role in image cultivation. Research demonstrated that images of nations often manifest national identities (Hayden, 2012; Luther, 2002; Said, 1979, 1994; Zollner, 2006). As particular images of foreign nations became an accepted form of the Western consciousness throughout the history, these images were also embraced as the sense of identity for foreign nations in relation to other countries and people (Said, 1979, 1994). For example, Powers and Samuel-Azran

(2014) found that as individuals consume more information via international broadcasters, these individuals become more susceptible to internalization of the ideological perspective promoted by the medium and making it part of their identity.

Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2013, 2015) aggregated these ideas about different components of a country's image and developed the 4D Model, using concepts from reputation management, national identity theory (Smith, 1991), and attitude theory (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The researchers conceptualized the country image as "a subjective stakeholder attitude toward a nation and its state, comprising specific beliefs and general feelings in a functional, a normative, an aesthetic, and a sympathetic dimension" (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015, p. 113). Thus, the country image is comprised of cognitive and affective components. Cognitive component consists of beliefs regarding a country's political and economic performance, its norms and values, and its cultural and natural attractiveness. The affective component consists of general feelings of sympathy toward a country. As Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2013, 2015) argued, emotions and sympathy toward a country (affective component) are dependent on the beliefs of publics/stakeholders about the functional, normative, and aesthetic dimensions of the country image (cognitive component). Such conceptualization of the images of nations highlights the complexity of the country image as a construct in international public relations (Kunczik, 1997) and mediated public diplomacy (Gilboa, 2000; Yang et al., 2012) that has "manifest effects on the success of a country's business, trade, tourism and diplomatic relations because it affects the behavior of central stakeholders abroad" (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2013, p. 62).

Zaharna (2010) described mediated approach to public diplomacy as a mass communication approach. From the mass communication perspective, communication problems are largely perceived as information problems, derived from the lack of sufficient and accurate information. For this reason, the international broadcasting and other information initiatives are considered the staples of mediated public diplomacy (Zaharna, 2010). Sheafer and Gabay (2009) called mediated public diplomacy a "strategic contest over international agenda building" (p. 448) and Entman (2008) described it as a "government's strategic attempts to exert control over the framing of the country's policy in foreign media" (p. 89).

Images of nations and the mediated approach to public diplomacy have been preoccupying the minds of scholars, practitioners, and nation-states alike. A variety of studies examined mediated public diplomacy (Albritton & Manheim, 1985; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Golan & Viatchaninova, 2013; Fullerton & Kendrick, 2006; Lee & Hong, 2012; Wang & Chang, 2004; Yang et al., 2012;) and found support for the first- and second-level agenda setting effects of mediated public diplomacy, arguing that international media coverage influences the perceptions of foreign nations (Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004). Specifically, mediated images have been at the center of attention because they provide mental references for individuals to evaluate the actions of other countries (Yang et al., 2012). Furthermore, "exposure to mass media is associated with relatively positive, if not well-informed, images of foreign countries and perception of them as being successful" (McNelly & Izcaray, 1986, p. 546). Therefore, understanding the image cultivation through media is important because many countries engage in international public relations and public diplomacy efforts, heavily relying on media

tactics (Dolea, 2015; Zhang & Cameron, 2003). These efforts often are closely associated with the mediation of the nations' images, identities, and their foreign policies via international broadcasting (Kunzcik, 1997; Zaharna, 2010).

This view draws a parallel with Hayden's (2012) assertions regarding the cultivation of nation's image through the media with frequent references to cultural norms and values, and dispositional characteristics of the nation could have an expected diplomatic benefit. In other words, positive image of a country, constructed via communicating and projecting identity and globally accepted social norms and values that represent the country (i.e. democracy, human rights), enables positive political outcomes.

According to Yang et al. (2012), until recently mediated image cultivation has been an unchallenged approach to public diplomacy. Scholars (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Leonard, Stead, & Smewing, 2002; Melissen, 2005; Szondi, 2009; Wang, 2006) suggested that public diplomacy is not merely about information campaigns; it is about relationship building, the idea that is central to contemporary public relations scholarship. Further, Yang et al. (2012) argued that "a recognition of the multiple, complex, ongoing relationships" is missing from the modern conceptions of public diplomacy (p. 653). Zaharna (2007, 2013) also criticized mediated approach to public diplomacy, saying that it is no longer about an "information battle," and the Cold War strategies are largely ineffective. She postulated that the intricate web of relationships and relationship building between and among numerous actors should be at the heart of discussions on public diplomacy. This idea is embodied in the relational approach to

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public diplomacy that places relationship-centered initiatives at the heart of public diplomacy scholarship and practice.

Relational Approach to Public Diplomacy

The shift toward a relational approach to public diplomacy has been attributed to the influence of public relations on public diplomacy as public relations scholars attempted to reconceptualize and classify public diplomacy activities under the framework of four public relations models (Signitzer & Coombs, 1992; Signitzer & Wamser, 2006; Yun, 2006). Kruckeberg and Vujnovic (2005) contended that in order for modern public diplomacy to be effective, it "should rely, not only on political theory and the theories of international relations but also on theories and models of public relations that are based on two-way symmetrical communication and community building" (p. 296). Conceptualizing public diplomacy practice through the lens of public relations models opened doors for the influx of public relations theory into public diplomacy.

As an evolving practice, public diplomacy increasingly resembles modern understanding of public relations, both conceptually and practically. Many public relations scholars suggested a relational approach to public diplomacy (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Snow, 2009; Yang et al., 2012). Among the first studies to apply public relations theories was Yun's (2006) research testing the applicability of the Excellence Theory to public diplomacy. Yun (2006) concluded that all public relations principles of excellence are transferable to public diplomacy and the two-way symmetric model of public diplomacy is viable with the focus on such public diplomacy practices as

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international exchanges, cultural diplomacy, interpersonal communication and virtual networks.

Similarly, Wang (2006) suggested that "public diplomacy is not merely about advocating and promoting political and economic goals to the international public; it is, instead, about the relationship between nations and cultures through better communication" (p. 93). Further, Snow (2014) argued that "relationship-building is by far the most closely aligned dimension of public diplomacy associated with public relations" (p. 85).

Indeed, relationship building can be considered a unifying construct between public relations and public diplomacy. Melissen (2005) suggested that public diplomacy must learn from public relations the value of relationship building because "the strength of firm relationships largely determines the receipt and success of individual messages and overall attitudes" (p. 21). Szondi (2009) also advocated a public relations approach to public diplomacy because "public relations is about building and maintaining long-term relationships and trust with key stakeholders and publics in order to create mutual understanding" (p. 296). Therefore, for both fields, public relations and public diplomacy, relationship (i.e. cooperation) represents the ultimate goal and an essential element in ensuring good reputation and positive image.

The relational approach to public diplomacy emphasizes engagement over information dissemination (Snow, 2014). In comparison to mediated approach, the solution to communication problem is not more information but the increased contacts and interaction between parties, enhancing appreciation of the other culture through movies, literature, sports, tourism, culture, language, etc. (Zaharna, 2010). As such,

relational approach seeks to maintain positive social structures to create a better international environment, because from the relational perspective communication is a social process that regulates the relationships within a larger social context (Melissen, 2005).

In the relational approach to public diplomacy the communication problem is viewed as a relationship problem, and therefore, all efforts are directed toward defining, maintaining, and enhancing the relationship (Zaharna, 2010). However, the act of communication in itself inescapably implies a relationship, where interpersonal communication plays an integral part (van Ruler & Vercic, 2004; Zaharna, 2015).

According to Leonard (2002), interpersonal communication is the ideal channel for public diplomacy because it is more credible than media and reflects the participatory nature of the relational approach. However, interpersonal communication is not the most efficient medium as it is time and resource consuming, yet it might be the most effective in the long term (Zaharna, 2010). Further, while publics in public diplomacy still receive information via traditional media, the interpretation of this information occurs in the context of interpersonal relationships. In other words, the meaning that an individual draws from an image or a media message, its reception and retention depend on the relationship. As Zaharna (2010) described it, "Information draws its value not by how effectively it is designed or delivered (a one-time occurrence), but by how fast and excessively it is circulated within the social context" (p. 147).

According to Zaharna (2010), there are several prominent characteristics of the relational approach to public diplomacy that are essential for the understanding of

public diplomacy initiatives undertaken under the umbrella of the relational framework. First, the relationships are central, and there are many of them. The focus of relational public diplomacy initiatives is to identify the important ones and then maintain and enhance those relationships. Second, mutual interests define the importance of the relationship, and therefore relational public diplomacy activities are focused on finding common grounds. Third, relational public diplomacy initiatives often neglect strategic communication elements such as messaging strategies and instead focus on symbolic gestures demonstrating reciprocity and mutuality. Fourth, relational public diplomacy activities emphasize coordination rather than control (cultural exchanges, for example). Fifth, participatory nature of relational approach tends to focus more on interaction rather than presentations. Finally, because relationships are at the center of relational approach, relational public diplomacy activities focus on continuity and sustainability (Zaharna, 2010, p. 148-149).

Similarly, in public relations literature, positive and trusting relationships contribute to the organizational successes and allow organizations to benefit from it by advancing organizational goals (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). As such, good relationship history between an organization (governments in the case of public diplomacy) and its stakeholders ensures positive image, making it a by-product of the relationship building. At the same time, "in relational initiatives defining, maintaining, and enhancing the relationship is primary; pursuing the relationship by-products is secondary" Zaharna explained (2010, p. 147). In other words, relationship building is viewed as the end in itself without clear expectation of the gains. This makes the

relational approach to public diplomacy hard to justify, partially due to the need for

measurement and evaluation (Pamment, 2014a).

Integrated Approach to Public Diplomacy

The relational and mediated approaches to public diplomacy often are described

in the literature as antagonistic, as scholars and practitioners declare their preference for

one or the other (Fitzpatrick, 2007; 2013; Golan, 2013). These approaches are not

mutually exclusive, and according to Golan (2013), "should complement rather than

replace a strategic global communication effort" (p. 1251).

The integrated approach to public diplomacy builds on the idea that strategic

government-to-citizen engagement is a type of interpersonal communication that is

mediated through global satellite networks and social media and, therefore, relational

and mediated approaches are fused together to enhance the effectiveness of public

diplomacy. Golan (2013) identified three components of integrated public diplomacy

based on the goal orientation of public diplomacy initiatives: long-term, medium-term,

and short-term. The goal orientation of public diplomacy initiatives corresponds to the

relational public diplomacy initiatives, nation-branding/country reputation initiatives,

and mediated public diplomacy initiatives respectively (Golan, 2013).

The classification of public diplomacy activities based on goal orientation goes

back to one of the first conceptualization of public diplomacy by international relations

scholars Deibel and Roberts (1976), who distinguished between tough-minded and

tender-minded approaches to public diplomacy. They characterized the distinction as

the separation of information and culture as two different foreign policy functions,

because "information connotes the one-sided advocacy of a point of view while culture

signifies the furthering of mutual understanding" (Deibel & Roberts, 1976, p.11). The tough-minded and tender-minded approaches to public diplomacy correspond with the short-term and long-term goal orientation respectively (Snow, 2009).

The tough-minded view of public diplomacy argues that the purpose of public diplomacy is to influence foreign attitudes to favor nation's image and policies (Signitzer & Coombs, 1992). The tough-minded approach tends to see public diplomacy mostly as an informational activity rather than a cultural program; therefore, it is represented primarily by media diplomacy (e.g. international broadcasting) with the main goal of exerting influence for a relatively *short-term policy ends* (Snow, 2009). Short-term orientation refers to government policies that have a need to be achieved in a short period. In this case, consequences of public diplomacy are seen as immediate and not continuous (Singnitzer & Coombs, 1992). Public diplomacy initiatives with short-term orientation are mostly concerned with options and outcomes of the current period and are often curated by the tough-minded public diplomats who "stand ready to push whatever line seems best calculated to advance the policy need of the moment" (Deibel & Roberts, 1976, p. 14). The tough-minded perspective was later named in the public relations literature as the mediated approach to public diplomacy (Signitzer & Coombs, 1992; Snow, 2009; Taylor & Kent, 2013; Yang et al., 2012; Zaharna, 2010).

A tender-minded approach to public diplomacy, on the other hand, represents a cultural function, a cocreational approach with a goal of creating a climate of mutual understanding for a long-term relationship building (Botan & Taylor, 2004; Deibel & Roberts, 1976; Singnitzer & Coombs, 1992). It focuses mostly on people-to-people and government-to-people communication (Snow, 2009). As Signitzer and Coombs (1992)

maintained, in the tender-minded approach, cultural programs may bypass current foreign policy goals in order to achieve *long-term national objectives*. Long-term goal orientation refers to government policies that do not yield immediate results but project a relational, political and economic gain in the future. In this case, consequences of public diplomacy are not seen immediately and can be measured only indirectly (Signitzer & Wamser, 2006). Deibel and Roberts (1976) argued that "changing foreign attitudes is a process to be measured in years, and the only feasible goal is to create a climate of mutual understanding in which the particulars of future national policies can be communicated abroad in a receptive atmosphere" (p. 15). Public diplomacy initiatives with long-term orientation focus on achieving future goals and are concerned with both current and future outcomes. Tender-minded view of public diplomacy is concerned with the long-term policy objectives that include broad-gauged messages to promote peaceful and cooperative solutions to the major problems of the world (Deibel & Roberts, 1976). This perspective has later been labeled in public relations literature as a relational approach to public diplomacy (Snow, 2014; Zaharna, 2010).

According to Golan and Yang (2014), relational approach to public diplomacy is usually long-term because it focuses on building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with foreign publics over time. The relational initiatives, or what Golan (2013) called "soft power programs" (p. 1251), include international aid, development and exchange programs, and target governments, corporations and NGOs.

Golan and Yang (2014) argued that a complete understanding of public diplomacy is not possible by siding with either a relational (tender-minded) approach or a mediated (tough-minded) approach, because "the long-term success of relationship

building and stewardship is often contingent on the success or failure of organizations to communicate their values, culture or policies to their target audience" (p. 4). Signitzer (2008) similarly argued that both types of public diplomacy have a place in government communication as they can be applied to achieve different goals.

To tackle this shortcoming, Golan (2013) advocated for an integrated approach to public diplomacy that would address a variety of communication goals in public diplomacy ranging from long to medium to long term. By so doing, he introduced three layers of public diplomacy: 1) the short- to medium-term oriented mediated public diplomacy, 2) the medium- to long-term oriented nation branding, and 3) the long-term oriented relational public diplomacy.

While mediated and relational approaches to public diplomacy have been previously discussed in the public diplomacy literature, nation branding has been considered an outsider. By introducing nation branding as one of the components of integrated public diplomacy, Golan (2013) argued that the nation branding initiatives are more tactical in nature linking issues and cultural attributes to nations through public relations and marketing tactics (Kaneva, 2011; Rassmussen & Merkelsen, 2012).

The concept of nation branding was introduced by Simon Anholt, who argued that nation branding creates a nation brand or a competitive identity, a way "to consider how the nation as a whole presents and represents itself to other nations" (Anholt, 2006, p. 271). Initially, for Anholt (2006), public diplomacy was a subset of nation branding because public diplomacy appeared to focus mostly on presentation and representation of government policies to other publics. The main reason for arguing the superiority of nation branding over public diplomacy was that policy represents only one aspect of

national activity, whereas "nation branding attempts to harmonize policy, people, sport and culture, products, tourism, trade and investment promotion and talent recruitment" (Anholt, 2006, p. 271).

While agreeing with Anholt on his understanding of the association between nation branding and public diplomacy, Roy (2007) suggested that nation branding should be distinguished from the related concept of public diplomacy, because the latter refers to the "activities of a government engaged in promoting a certain image of its nation-state to be used as an instrument of power and influence in international political relations" (p. 571). Public diplomacy, on the other hand, in its true calling builds mutual understanding (Zaharna, 2013).

According to Melissen (2005), nation branding and public diplomacy are "distinct but not entirely dissimilar responses to the increased salience of countries identities" (p. 19). Further, he argued that nation branding and public diplomacy are mostly complementary and public diplomacy may prosper more if used by a country that invests in nation branding. Dolea (2015) referred to such phenomenon as "country promotion" (p. 275), when state actors use public diplomacy, nation branding, and public relations for competitive advantage.

To emphasize the distinction, Anholt (2014) suggested that public diplomacy is more suitable for building and maintaining international relations by developed countries, whereas nation branding is more suitable for promoting the economic development of the emerging and transitional countries, where "country brands" have not been strongly established, and those who lack soft power. By creating a competitive

identity, a nation then is able to wield the soft power to achieve its public diplomacy goals (Anholt, 2014; Golan & Yang, 2014).

The main difference between public diplomacy and nation branding and the argument against its incorporation into public diplomacy is that while public diplomacy and nation branding are the overlapping and complementary concepts, they fundamentally differ in their approach (manipulating perceptions vs. building relationships). As such, nation branding is about re-shaping and accentuating one's country identity (Melissen, 2005). Nation branding traditionally uses marketing techniques to project the desired identity to foreign audiences using one-way communication (Szondi, 2008). Public diplomacy, on the other hand, is concerned with maintaining and promoting smooth international relations. This is achieved through communication and relationship building (Fitzpatrick, 2007).

To harmonize the contradictions between nation branding and public diplomacy and to avoid labeling nation branding as an instrument for promoting propagandistic and ideologically charged messages about a country, Szondi (2008) advocated for the integration of public relations in nation branding. Building on Gregory's (2007) notion of *negotiated brands* where external and internal stakeholders create value through engagement with a brand, he suggested treating nation brands as value-enhancers and relationships rather than perceptual entities or images. "Meaning creation proceeds value creation particularly in the case of nation brands. Nation brand values are often rooted in and reflect national values, which can be interpreted in different ways by different cultures. Meanings and values are culture-specific and not universal," explained Szondi (2008, p. 337).

By integrating mediated and relational approaches to public diplomacy with nation branding/country reputation components, Golan and Yang (2014) focus on medium-to-long-term public diplomacy initiatives and thus cover the gap that was not addressed by other approaches.

Collaborative and Network Approaches to Public Diplomacy

The collaborative and network approaches to public diplomacy also emerged in response to the dominance of mediated and relational perspectives. One may argue that the collaborative and network perspectives represent an extension of the relational approach to public diplomacy, where relationships still hold a central place (Zaharna, 2013). However, relationships in this approach are conceptualized in the context of networks and collaboration activities.

Describing the mediated approach as monologue and relational as dialogue, Cowan and Arsenault (2008) introduced a third layer of public diplomacy – collaboration. In short, they defined collaboration as a "cross-national participation in a joint venture or project with a clearly defined goal" (Cowan & Arsenault, 2008, p. 10). Arguably a more effective approach to engaging with foreign publics, collaboration as a public diplomacy strategy is designed to complement existing taxonomies rather than replace them.

According to Cowan and Arsenault (2008), monolog (mediated public diplomacy), dialogue (relational public diplomacy) and collaboration have their advantages in application to a particular situation. As Melissen (2005) argued, instead of focusing on identifying the best ways to reach foreign publics, one must focus on

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relationship building aspects of each public diplomacy mode. Both network and collaborative approaches emphasize relationship building.

Indeed, relational activities are the basis for collaborative and network approaches to public diplomacy. According to Zaharna (2010), there are three levels of relational activities: 1) cultural and educational exchanges, special envoys, 2) public participation, partnership coordination, 3) policy networking strategies and coalition building, an increased involvement of nonstate actors. The complexity of relational activities varies significantly, and the more complex relational initiatives morph into the network and collaborative forms of public diplomacy (Zaharna, 2010).

The collaborative and network approaches belong under the same theoretical umbrella, yet the two perspectives differ in a number of ways. While similar in purpose, communication and relational dynamics separate network and collaborative forms of public diplomacy. Network public diplomacy initiatives emphasize *structure*, whereas collaborative efforts emphasize *process* (Zaharna, 2013). For example, mediated digital public diplomacy initiatives allow to create a network structure relatively easily and disseminate information within that network, yet they do not necessarily ensure collaboration. On the other hand, as argued by Fisher (2013), collaboration facilitates "means through which individual actions could collaborate to produce something meaningful" (p. 209).

According to Zaharna (2013), network public diplomacy is not a panacea or a substitute for other forms of public diplomacy. As Lovink (2012) contended, networks without a cause are a waste of time. That is because networks vary widely based on their design characteristics such as network structure, network synergy, and network

strategy. As such, networks serve different purposes. Zaharna (2013) identified six types of *networks of purpose* that match available public diplomacy tools: 1) networks of awareness for information dissemination; 2) networks of influence for changing attitudes and behaviors; 3) networks of exchange for sharing information and resources; 4) networks of empowerment for building individual and institutional capacity; 5) networks of cooperation for coordination of tasks and resources; and 6) networks of collaboration for generating value-added information.

These networks of purpose differ in their design – network structure, network synergy and network strategy. A scarcity of one component or the other will determine an alignment of design with purpose. Zaharna (2013) argued that the effectiveness of an initiative "depends on the alignment between public diplomacy goals and the network initiative's structure and communication/relational dynamics" (p. 174).

To extend Zaharna's argument on network public diplomacy, Yang and Taylor (2014) introduced a soft power network approach to public diplomacy. Using Castells' (2001) understanding of social structures as expressions of networks, Yang and Taylor argued that nations and organizations could acquire soft power by being included in important networks. For example, the expulsion of Russia in 2014 from the G8, a network of the world's greatest powers, significantly affected Russia's soft power standing from 22 to 25 (Monocle, 2015). In other words, networks produce soft power and therefore governments "should shift their focus from sending out information to the public in other nations to building a collaborative network that facilitates and fulfills the objectives of all of the partners" (Yang & Taylor, 2014, p. 578).

The main critique of the network approach and network studies of public diplomacy is their focus on egocentric networks that emphasize the personal nature of communities and social relations (Chua, Madej, & Wellman, 2011; Yang & Taylor, 2014). In this approach, public is treated as networks of social relations emanating from a focal individual (opinion leader, influencer), whose position within the network is essential for information flow.

Zaharna (2013) argued that egocentric view of networks in public diplomacy initiatives is not as insightful as understanding the overall strength of the network and its capabilities for information flow. Thus, looking at the whole network design characteristics such as network structure, synergy and strategy may inform the practitioners' expertise of which *network of purpose* is most suitable for which public diplomacy initiative. For example, Zaharna (2013) argued that matching network synergy and strategy have the "potential to transform a collection of network ties into a dynamic, sustainable collaborative initiative" (p. 174). Therefore, in a way, a collaborative approach to public diplomacy can be considered a better approach to ensure sustainability and continuity that lead to change and innovation (Fisher, 2013).

As such, "collaborative projects almost without exception include dialogue between participants and stakeholders, but they also include concrete and typically easily identifiable goals and outcomes that provide a useful basis and structure upon which to form more lasting relationships" (Cowen & Arsenault, 2008, p. 21). Examining collaborative forms of public diplomacy and comparing it to how an open source software propels change and innovation, Fisher (2008, 2013) offered three building blocks of the collaborative approach to public diplomacy: 1) relationships and

information pathways, 2) coordination and aggregation, and 3) inter-organizational innovation. In other words, collaboration, interaction, and connection become the key to creating change and driving innovation in targeted communities.

The first block of collaborative public diplomacy focuses on understanding the relationships, or what Fisher (2013) calls "pathways through which information flows" (p. 210). This is an alternative view of relationships as conduits of information as opposed to receivers of information. According to Fisher, a relationship can ensure the access to information, disseminate information, as well as constrain the information availability. Therefore, a collaborative public diplomacy is dependent on good relationships as it relies on it as pathways through which information flows within and between communities (Fisher, 2013).

The second block of collaborative public diplomacy focuses on coordination and aggregation, by way of identifying focal points – pre-existing shared desires and needs of the target communities (Fisher, 2013). Recognizing focal points allows developing means of collaborating with communities who are ready to take action, aggregating that impact. Such approach provides the potential to understand a community through aggregating interactions or opinion.

The third block of collaborative public diplomacy blends relationships and societal needs and desires (focal points) to produce innovation (Fisher, 2013). In other words, to create change and innovation in target communities, it is important to understand relationships as conduits of information (information pathways) and recognize aspirations of the target communities to capitalize (aggregate) on. As Fisher

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explained, the produced innovation constitutes the value of collaboration in public diplomacy.

For Fisher, the core issue of other approaches to public diplomacy rests on the assumption that foreign audiences are passive and because of that these publics require an external authority to bring about change. This conjecture often misjudges the power and capacity of citizens within target communities to act. The collaborative public diplomacy takes it into account and is concerned with ways of translating the desire to change into action by focusing on the most likely means to influence behavior, not just on improving messages and perception (Fisher, 2013).

Zaharna (2013) argued that collaborative initiatives in public diplomacy are not common, because "collaboration means individuals are not only connecting and sharing information, but through the process of their interactions are generating knowledge, innovation, and synergistic results" that affects all parties (Zaharna, 2013, p. 173). Cowen and Arsenault (2008) argued that collaboration can serve as a conduit for information sharing and collaborative endeavors possess transformative power for public diplomacy relationships.

The challenge of collaborative and network approaches is that there is no clear strategies or operationalization for how to develop, implement and measure an effective network and collaborative public diplomacy initiative. As Cowen and Arsenault (2008) contended, the value of such approach lies in the creation of social capital where "projects, networks, and partnerships, both within and between communities, have value because they breed social trust, foster norms of reciprocity, and create stores of goodwill" (p. 23).

Yang and Taylor (2014) argued that the benefit of network and collaborative approaches to public diplomacy lies in enhancing a country's soft power. In network and collaborative perspective, the relative worth of individuals and nation-states is contingent upon the fact whether they are included or not in major networks. The inclusion in a network and the position within the network, therefore, fosters soft power of a country.

<center>**Public Relations' Contribution to Public Diplomacy**</center>

The review of the literature on public relations and public diplomacy identified four public relations approaches to public diplomacy. Some of the approaches were clearly articulated in the literature, while others required a literature synthesis and a meta-analysis to formulate them as stand-alone approaches to public diplomacy. The identified four approaches can be considered distinct approaches to public diplomacy but may also represent a theoretical development of public diplomacy thought within the public relations scholarship over time. There is a clear chronological progress from mediated to relational to integrated and network perspectives on public diplomacy (see Figure 2 that visualizes theoretical development of public diplomacy within the public relations scholarship).

To summarize, there are two distinct public relations approaches to public diplomacy: mediated and relational (see Table 1). Mediated approach is informed by mass communication view of public diplomacy (Sheafer & Gabay, 2009), image cultivation literature (Kunczik, 1997), and theories of national and cultural identities (Luther, 2002). In the mediated approach to public diplomacy, image is important and public relations plays a pivotal role in image cultivation, particularly if one considers

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how public relations facilitates media coverage of a country or nation state. Informed by mass communication perspective, mediated approach treats publics as inert consumers of public diplomacy messages. These publics are passive and require an external authority to initiate change. For this reason, the information distribution is preferred over the engagement. The increased flow of information via such public diplomacy strategies as international broadcasting and country promotion is expected to deliver clear outcomes in terms of image cultivation.

Figure 2. The Association Between Public Relations Approaches to Public Diplomacy as a Result of Their Theoretical Development
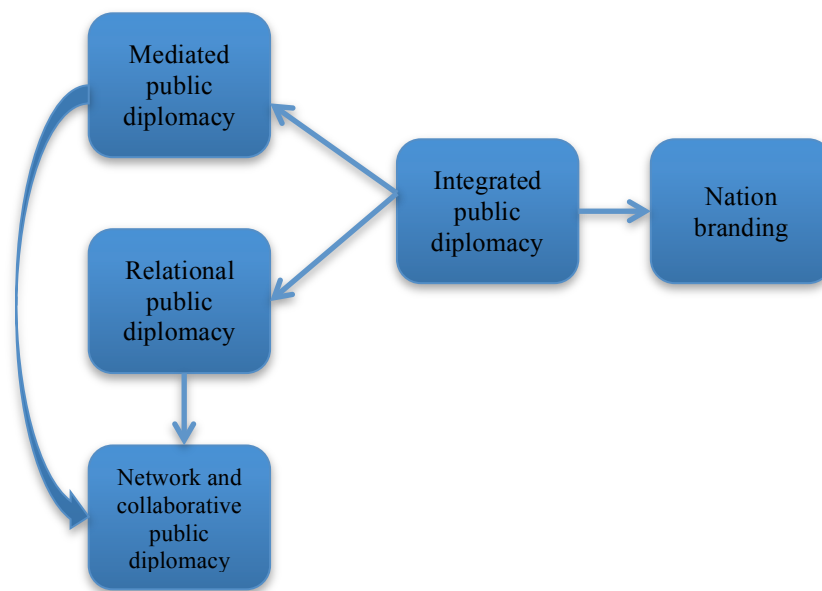
The relational approach to public diplomacy (Fitzpatrick, 2007) is informed by public relations perspective, specifically by the relationship building theory (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998) and two-way symmetrical approach (Yun, 2006). It emphasizes engagement over information dissemination via interpersonal communication using such public diplomacy strategies as cultural and educational exchanges (Zaharna, 2010).

Relationships, therefore, are at the center of relational approach through functional

practices of public relations. To participate in the relational public diplomacy initiatives

publics need to be active, yet they still require an external authority to bring about

change, as relationships are usually initiated by the advocate state. Relational public

diplomacy initiatives are not expected to produce clear outcome or gain, yet they are

expected to create value (see Table 1).

The integrated approach and network and collaborative approach to public

diplomacy are variations and/or extensions of the previous two approaches (see Figure

2). The integrated approach successfully marries relational and mediated approaches to

create one of strategic nature (Golan, 2013). It combines relational initiatives, nation

branding initiatives, and mediated initiatives to addresses diverse strategic goals (short-

term, medium-term, long-term) of the advocate state. The image of a country is

conceived as a negotiated brand, value of which is created by engaging with the brand.

In this approach, public relations helps facilitate the value of the brand by encouraging

engagement. However, engagement is treated as a mediated interpersonal

communication, highlighting the role of new participatory media. Integrated approach

utilizes full spectrum of public diplomacy initiatives plus marketing strategies of nation

branding and country promotion (see Table 1). Being a strategic approach, there are

always clear expectations of gain in the form of information dissemination, image

cultivation or relationship maintenance.

Although the network and collaborative approach to public diplomacy can be

considered an extension of the relational approach, such an approach also represents a

qualitatively different thinking about public diplomacy, bringing the role of publics and

engagement to the forefront of public diplomacy initiatives. Network and collaborative

approach is informed by ideas of dialogue and collaboration (Cowan & Arsenault,

2008; Kent & Taylor, 2002), as well as relational perspective (Botan & Taylor, 2004;

Fitzpatrick, 2007). It is considered an extension of the relational approach because

relationships are the basis of networks and collaboration, as more complex relational

activities morph into network and collaborative forms of public diplomacy (Fisher,

2013). The role of public relations in this approach is to facilitate these relationships as

pathways for information flow. In other words, the structure of relationships (network)

encourages information sharing and collaboration. Publics in network and collaborative

approach are active and do not need external authority to initiate change – they initiate

and are actively involved in implementing collaborative public diplomacy initiatives.

There are expectations of value creation as a result of collaboration in the form of

change or innovation using such strategies as coalition and network building.

Each approach has its own strengths and weaknesses. For example, the

shortcoming of the mediated approach to public diplomacy is its focus on clear

outcomes, which are not always possible to deliver purely through mediated initiatives.

In contrast, relational approach's lack of clear expectation of gain makes this approach

hard to justify. The integrated approach combines concepts with very different

underlying assumptions. The network and collaborative approach's focus on egocentric

network where one individual is at the center of social relations, presents a challenge for

the argument of networks as information pathways.

Table 1. (Un)acknowledged Assumptions in Public Diplomacy Approaches

Approaches to public diplomacy	Unacknowledged assumptions
Mediated public diplomacy	- Image is important - Public relations efforts facilitate media coverage of a country - Political and economic structures of nations affects their image - National identity play a role in image cultivation - Publics are mostly passive and require external authority to bring change - Short-term initiatives - Emphasis on information over engagement - Communication problem is information problem - Clear expectation of gain - Main strategy: international broadcasting, nation branding, country promotion
Relational public diplomacy	- Mutual interests define the importance of relationship - Emphasis on engagement over information dissemination - Emphasis on more contacts and interaction than on more information - Emphasis on symbolic gestures rather than strategic messages - Emphasis on coordination rather than control - Interpretation of mediated messages occurs in the context of interpersonal communication - Image is a by-product of relationship building and not a strategic goal - Publics are mostly passive and require external authority to bring change - Long-term initiatives - No clear expectation of gain - Main strategy: interpersonal communication via educational and cultural exchanges
Integrated public diplomacy	- Image as a negotiated brand is important - Marries mediated and relational approaches - Engagement is a mediated interpersonal communication - Communication is government-centered - Long, medium and short term initiatives - Long-term successes depend on short-term initiatives - Clear expectation of gain - Main strategy: international broadcasting, nation branding, exchanges, country promotion
Collaborative and network public diplomacy	- Relationships are basis for network and collaboration initiatives - Relationships as pathways for information flow - More complex relational activities morph into network and collaborative forms of public diplomacy - Networks' strength and structure affect capabilities for information flow - Publics are active and involved in public diplomacy initiatives - Expectation of value creation - Main strategy: Coalition and network building

Public relations contributions to public diplomacy are often discussed in terms of practical applications, where public diplomacy adopts public relations practices of relationship building and creating mutual understanding. The presented analysis of the four public relations approaches to public diplomacy demonstrated that public relations casts deep theoretical influence on public diplomacy and highlights the interdisciplinary nature of public diplomacy. While there is an observable chronological progress in the development of these approaches, these approaches are not mutually exclusive and successfully coexist in practice and theory (see Figure 2).

The presented approaches to public diplomacy highlighted the interconnectedness and conceptual convergence between public relations and public diplomacy. It also presents a convincing case for treating public diplomacy as one of the applied functions of public relations. For this reason, this dissertation treats public diplomacy as a subfield of public relations, to which theories and principles of public relations are transferable.

In general, the influx of public relations thought into public diplomacy scholarship facilitated a significant shift in public diplomacy theory, forcing a reconceptualization of public diplomacy as *new public diplomacy.* As Melissen (2005) argued, the emergence of new public diplomacy was preconditioned by the technological developments and characterized by the embrace of nonstate actors as public diplomacy conductors and by the acceptance of the *soft power* role in it.

Many discussions of public diplomacy today are largely based on the notion of soft power, yet the role and place of soft power in public diplomacy are not clearly articulated and the two terms are often conflated (Fisher, 2011; Macnamara, 2012;

Servaes, 2012). The next section addresses this concern and discusses the available literature on the topic.

Soft Power and Public Diplomacy: Defining the Relationship

In international relations, power is usually exerted to achieve a strategic goal of foreign policy – be it cooperation or coercion. Nye (2002) described three ways to influence international actors and achieve strategic goals: 1) using sticks (military threats, use of force), 2) using carrots (inducements, economic sanctions), and 3) using attraction (soft power). Based on this taxonomy Joseph Nye (1990) originally defined power in international relations as multidimensional: military power, economic power, and soft power. Later, this categorization of power was reformulated as a dichotomy, hard power versus soft power (Nye, 2004).

According to Nye (2004), hard power uses material means of coercion and payment to achieve desired goals, whereas soft power is the ability of the state to attain its strategic objectives immaterially through co-option – "getting others to want the outcomes that you want" (p. 5). The exertion of hard power is usually associated with the use of military and economic sanctions. The exertion of soft power is associated with the softer means of persuasion, good will, shared values, and cooperative sentiments. In other words, soft power is all things immaterial such as appealing values, ethics, and exemplary achievements of a country (Ronfeldt & Arquilla, 2009). Soft power, however, is often used in conjunction with more forceful and threatening forms of compliance and persuasion, which Nye calls smart power (Nye, 2008).

The concept of soft power is widely used to explain the function and value of public diplomacy (Fitzpatrick, 2010, 2013; Hayden, 2012; Melissen, 2005; Seib, 2006;

Wang, 2008; Zaharna et al., 2013). According to Hayden (2012), soft power was readily adopted by policy makers to justify and implement "foreign policies and programs that specifically leverage the assets of attraction" (p. 17), such as public diplomacy.

In a bipolar world of the Cold War, public diplomacy did not require justification. Its purpose was clear – to fight the ideology of the competing bloc (Staar, 1986). In a modern, multipolar world, the purpose of public diplomacy is more ambiguous, and the effectiveness of its traditional tools is disputed (Hayden, 2012; Yang et al., 2012; Seib, 2006). Because soft power represents a third, complementary dimension to the traditional understanding of a nation's power, soft power became a catchphrase to validate relocation of resources to policies like public diplomacy, international broadcasting, and strategic communication (Hayden, 2012).

The constant need to justify, assess and reassess the purpose and effectiveness of public diplomacy resulted in a conceptual conflation of the terms public diplomacy and soft power. Scholars and practitioners often use these terms interchangeably, and many conceptualizations of public diplomacy include soft power (Fitzpatrick, 2013; Pamment, 2014a; Taylor & Kent, 2013; Yang, et al., 2012). For example, Batora (2003) argued that public diplomacy is comprised of "activities by state and nonstate actors that contribute to the maintenance and promotion of a country's soft power" (p. 4). Lord (2006) advocated that "public diplomacy, in order to be truly effective, must be about the active projection of soft power in order to reinforce American influence – or to generate it where otherwise absent" (p. 20). Hayden (2012) postulated that there is a strong link between soft power and public diplomacy because of the common emphasis on influence. Taylor and Kent (2013) argued that activist organizations build social

capital and opportunities through networks for *soft power public diplomacy,* which

"may also provide a useful measuring stick for soft power appeal" (p. 180). Rugh

(2009) stated that public diplomacy "can – and often does – make use of soft power" (p.

12). In addition, scholars and practitioners advanced the idea that to leverage soft power

implies efforts to influence or cultivate attitudes through public diplomacy (Fisher,

2011; Gilboa, 2006; Hayden, 2012; Risse, 2000; Solomon, 2014).

Taking into consideration public relations and soft power influences, Audette

(2013) defined public diplomacy as the "communication of state and nonstate actors

with publics in an attempt to shape favorable public opinion about an issue, to gain a

better understanding of the public, and to achieve a certain policy objective within the

government or an international institution" (p. 50). In other words, according to Audette

(2013), public diplomacy utilizes public relations tools and non-coercive soft power

strategies to create change through harnessing the power of the people. Although public

diplomacy is inevitably linked to power – the ability of one country or government to

influence the actions of another country or government (Snow, 2009) – the association

between soft power and public diplomacy requires examination and scrutiny.

Being broadly defined as the power of attraction (Nye, 2004), the soft power

concept undoubtedly competes for shared meaning with public diplomacy. Perceived as

non-coercive, soft power is seen as a more ethical solution to furthering national

interests and foreign policy, particularly as applied in public diplomacy (Fitzpatrick,

2013). This power exists regardless of whether it's being utilized or not; therefore a

view of public diplomacy from the soft power perspective focuses on capitalizing on the

soft power reserves by state and nonstate actors.

However, the unacknowledged assumptions about the nature of soft power (e.g. the notion of attraction) prevent the application of the term not only theoretically but also practically, as practitioners who claim to use soft power strategically are yet to discover how to make their ideas attractive and cultivate or apply soft power (Mattern, 2005).

There are several assumptions in the discussions of soft power and public diplomacy that need to be addressed before defining the role of soft power in public diplomacy and in formulating the soft power approach. First, soft power represents a form of power and, therefore, it is necessary to discuss the assumptions associated with it. Second, it is important to consider the sources of soft power. The basic assumption behind Nye's idea of soft power is that there are sources of power beyond material assets (Nye, 2004). These sources are rooted in a country's ideological and cultural appeal to others (Mattern, 2005).

Third, soft power is often discussed either as an instrument of public diplomacy or its outcome (Nye, 2004; Rugh, 2011), which might differ based on the approach used. Recognizing and discussing these assumptions will inform our understanding of the soft power and its role in each of the identified public relations approaches to public diplomacy. In what follows, this section outlines several unacknowledged assumptions about soft power that need to be considered when conceptualizing and defining soft power role in public diplomacy.

The Issue of "Power" in Soft Power

Max Weber (1946) suggested that politics is about the allocation and distribution of power. Given that public diplomacy and soft power are the domains of

international relations and foreign policy, both are inevitably tied to power. The broad definition of soft power as the ability to get what you want by attracting and persuading others to adopt your goals highlights this issue of power (Hayden, 2012; Fitzpatrick, 2013; Garrison, 2005; McDowell, 2008; Rugh, 2011; Wang, 2006), yet it also underestimates the question of whether soft power is found in materials resources, such as economy and military, or immaterial resources, such as relationships and image (Hiebert, 2005).

For many years public diplomacy was exclusively seen as a communication function of the government exerting influence over foreign publics with the goal of influencing their governments (Bardos, 2000). The discussions over this view became particularly heated after 9/11, and the view of mediated public diplomacy as a one-way, asymmetrical, power-over type of communication was cited as one of the reasons for failed public diplomacy campaigns in the early 2000s (Kruckeberg & Vujnovic, 2005). Therefore, the proposition of non-coercive, soft power approach was welcomed enthusiastically and was perceived as a more ethical approach to public diplomacy (Fitzpatrick, 2013; Fisher, 2011; Mattern, 2005). As a result, soft power became associated with the non-coercive "new public diplomacy" based on the ideas of cultural and ideological appeal (Melissen, 2005, p. 3), and traditional public diplomacy became associated with coercive, one-way, mediated strategies (Seib, 2009; Yang et al., 2012). As such, the new public diplomacy falls under the relational and network/collaborative approach to public diplomacy, whereas traditional public diplomacy is better explained through mediated and integrated approaches to public diplomacy.

Fisher (2011) suggested that there is a clear dichotomy of power relations in public diplomacy: (1) *power over*, when public diplomacy seeks to exert influence (coerces people into changing the perception or attitude) and (2) *empowerment*, when public diplomacy seeks to invest or equip people with power, enables them to act (relationships empower, networks empower). Fisher (2011) described these two approaches to public diplomacy as *empowering the community* and *exerting power* over the target audience, citing that the former one has greater potential for symmetrical engagement, but soft power has no place in it because of its inherent asymmetry.

Fisher (2011) also criticized Nye's description of soft power application to public diplomacy, because getting others "to adopt your goals" (Nye, 2013, §5) represents an understanding of influence in public diplomacy as *power over*. He further argued that such conceptualization leaves public diplomacy practitioners with a limited arsenal of tools, where dialogue, mutuality, and two-way communication become problematic. Fisher (2011) argued, "Soft power may sound dynamic to the domestic constituency, but it ultimately limits the power of public diplomacy practitioners to engage in the full range of possibilities" (p. 276).

Although Nye (2004) in his initial conceptualization defined soft power as a non-coercive power of attraction, Mattern (2005) suggested that soft power should be treated as a coercive form of power that is exercised through language. She argued that soft power, predetermined by more advantageous cultural and economic conditions, often serves as a trap for the target audience in which the audience is left with a non-choice and forced into compliance with a particular built-in worldview, ideology, values, and policies. Mattern (2005) explained: "What makes hard power 'hard' is its

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ability to threaten victims into compliance; that is, to coerce. Thus, where attraction rests upon coercion the logic of a distinction between soft and hard forms of power becomes unsustainable" (p. 587).

Mattern (2005) also argued that attraction is expressed through individual perceptions and therefore "soft power should not be understood in juxtaposition to hard power but as a continuation of it by different means" (p. 583). In other words, because many different material and immaterial things constitute soft power sources, economic and military might of a country (hard power) serves as one of them in the minds of the target audience. To Nye (2008) attraction is non-coercive, whereas to Mattern (2005) attraction, expressed through individual perceptions, is coercive by virtue of rhetorically trapping the target audience with a non-choice.

Fisher (2011) similarly argued that soft power is not a neutral power in itself and needs to be treated as any other form of power. According to Fisher, in a true engagement and empowerment-based approach to public diplomacy, all parties should be equally open to persuasion while attempting to persuade one another. He warned against the blind acceptance of soft power as the main approach to public diplomacy:

> The assumptions of this approach characterize it [public diplomacy] as neither mutual nor based on a reciprocal relationship. It excludes the development of common goals through dialogue, nor provides support to empower others to realize their goals. It is neither compromise nor negotiation. It is a belief in one's own perspective over another. It is an asymmetric power relationship in favor of the actor over the foreign public (p. 281).

To Nye (2004), the soft power that rests on attraction seems to promise an ethically superior method of political interaction. The empowerment-based understanding of soft power could lessen some of the contradictions brought by the issue of power, but this can depend on the utilized public diplomacy approach and the view of soft power as an instrument or outcome of public diplomacy. Importantly, a soft power based approach to public diplomacy does not make public diplomacy of an advocate country morally legitimate by default. Instead, it is up to the recipient, the foreign public, to decide whether to recognize public diplomacy message as acceptable and legitimate (Fitzpatrick, 2013).

This discussion highlights inherent contradictions in soft power-based conceptualizations of public diplomacy. Fitzpatrick (2103) argued that the focus on soft power fails to acknowledge "the importance of mutuality and dialogue in which both parties are conducive to change in attitudes and behavior and in which the achievement of mutual benefit is the designed outcome" (p. 33). Furthermore, "association between public diplomacy and power contributes to the notion that public diplomacy is more about competing and winning in the global marketplace of ideas instead than about building and sustaining mutually beneficial relationships" (Fitzpatrick, 2013, p. 32). However, the role of soft power in public diplomacy may also be preconditioned by how scholars and practitioners think about it – is it an instrument or an outcome of public diplomacy?

Soft Power as an Instrument and an Outcome of Public Diplomacy

Scholars and practitioners frequently discuss whether public diplomacy uses soft power as a tool that enhances the effectiveness of public diplomacy initiatives or

whether public diplomacy serves as a source of soft power, contributing to its build-up (Rugh, 2009). In other words, does public diplomacy build or wield soft power? Is soft power an instrument or an outcome of public diplomacy activities? Do some public relations approaches to public diplomacy treat soft power as an instrument of public diplomacy while others treat as an outcome of public diplomacy activities?

As with other types of power, soft power instruments (and resources) may take many different forms, including a country's cultural appeal, foreign development aid and disaster relief, and participation in international cooperation efforts (Szondi, 2009). Nye (2004) argued that soft power involves not only shaping the messages that a country wishes to present abroad, but also analyzing and understanding the ways these messages are interpreted by diverse societies, and developing the tools of listening as well as the tools of persuasion. In sum, Nye (2008) also considered public diplomacy as an essential instrument of soft power, which, to a certain extent, can only be achieved through public diplomacy.

According to Rugh (2009), soft power can be used as a resource in public diplomacy that furthers national interests. Although Nye (2008) conceived soft power as both a tool for a more successful public diplomacy and as a potential outcome of public diplomacy efforts, he saw public diplomacy mostly as an instrument that governments use to mobilize resources of attractiveness expressed through soft power:

> In international politics, the resources that produce soft power arise in large part from the values an organization expresses in its culture, in the examples it sets by its internal practices and policies, and in the way it handles relations with others. Public diplomacy is an instrument that governments use to mobilize

these resources to communicate with and attract the publics of other countries, rather than merely their governments. Public diplomacy tries to attract by drawing attention to these potential resources through broadcasting, subsidizing cultural exports, arranging exchanges, and so forth. But if the content of a country's culture, values and policies are not attractive, public diplomacy that "broadcast" them cannot produce soft power. It may produce just the opposite (p. 95).

Soft power as an instrument. Many scholars relate soft power to public diplomacy as its instrument. Hayden (2012) argued that public diplomacy remains a necessary tool for those actors seeking to leverage their soft power assets. Zaharna (2010) argued that the underlying strategic approach for wielding soft power is essentially a mediated (image-building) approach to public diplomacy. She suggested that a public diplomacy strategy that relies on carefully crafted messages delivered to target audiences via mass media with the goal of changing attitudes or behavior is amplified by a country's soft power.

Ostick (2002) also described public diplomacy and public affairs as mechanisms to enforce soft power:

Soft power is the ability to achieve desired outcomes in international affairs through attraction rather than coercion. It works by convincing others to follow, or getting them to agree to, norms and institutions that produce the desired behavior. Soft power can rest on the appeal of one's ideas or the ability to set the agenda in ways that shape the preferences of others. If a state can make its power legitimate in the perception of others and establish international

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institutions that encourage them to channel or limit their activities, it may not

need to expend as many of its costly traditional economic or military resources

(p. 3).

As an instrument, soft power serves as a strategic asset for successful

implementation of the foreign policy goals through public diplomacy means. Public

diplomacy initiatives can capitalize on existing soft power to achieve more substantial

results. As such, it serves as a strategic tool that scholars can explain the mechanisms of

and practitioners should be able to apply when necessary. Yet, the descriptions of

mechanisms behind the strategic application of soft power as an instrument of public

diplomacy are virtually nonexistent and/or vaguely defined (Mattern, 2005; Roselle et

al., 2014).

Soft power as an outcome. As stated earlier, in Nye's formulation, soft power is

both a tool to use for advancing national interests but also an asset to cultivate. As

Hayden (2012) explained, to achieve foreign policy goals public diplomacy uses soft

power and its many sources as leverage. However, soft power is often seen as a public

diplomacy's "post hoc measure of effectiveness in achieving foreign policy objectives"

(Hayden, 2012, p. 5). In other words, the strengthening of the soft power of an advocate

country can be treated as an outcome of public diplomacy efforts and a measure of its

success.

According to Rugh (2009), public diplomacy can potentially contribute to the

fostering of one country's soft power through government efforts designed to appeal to

the hearts and minds of foreign publics and thereby influence their government to be in

favor of the desired policies. In this case, it goes beyond government communication

efforts because it adopts forms other than just simple top-down communication. Instead, it focuses on the forms that create opportunities for discussion, honest exchange, and in-depth understanding (Wyne, 2009). In such conceptualization, treating soft power as an outcome of public diplomacy seems to fall in the realm of relational approach. For example, public diplomacy efforts such as Voice of America or international exchanges such as the Fulbright program often enhance soft power by "highlighting the attractiveness of U.S. cultural, political and educational capital" (Hayden, 2012, p. 4).

Rugh (2009) also suggested that public diplomacy is used to amplify the aspects of existing soft power by 1) explaining country's position in the international arena, 2) countering distortions and misinformation and 3) enhancing country's image and prestige. When soft power is instrumentalized by public diplomacy like this, it appears that by wielding soft power public diplomacy also yields it.

Soft power differential. To put in perspective the debate over soft power as a tool or an outcome of public diplomacy, Zaharna (2010) proposed a soft power differential. On one side, using the mediated approach, public diplomacy wields power (soft power as a tool). On another, public diplomacy creates soft power through a more relational and network communication approaches (soft power as an outcome).

Table 2. Soft Power and Approaches to Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy approaches	Instrument/Outcome (Rugh, 2009)	Mode of Power (Fisher, 2011)	Sources of Soft Power (Nye, 2004)
Mediated Approach	Instrument	Power over	Culture, values, policies
Relational Approach	Outcome	Empowerment	N/A
Integrated Approach	Both	Both	Culture, values, policies
Network/Collaborative Approach	Outcome	Empowerment	N/A

According to Zaharna (2010), mediated/image-building approach is based on production and dissemination of information attempting to wield soft power through targeted, mostly one-way, communication. Network communication approach is based on relations-centered connective strategy, which arguably helps create soft power (Zaharna, 2010). Although a good explanation, such conceptualization is problematic because it implies that mediated and image-building approach to public diplomacy is only about exerting soft power and never building it. This is a conflicting assertion considering the definition of soft power as the power of attraction with a potentially infinitive number of sources contributing to its accumulation or diminution, including one-way projections of an image, an essential element of a country promotion (Dolea, 2015; Nye, 2004). In addition, the integrated approach to public diplomacy suggests that relationships and relationship building in public diplomacy are mediated.

The assumptions of soft power differential (see Table 2) can be helpful and insightful when conceptualizing soft power and defining its role in public diplomacy. These assumptions may inform the choice of public diplomacy approaches and strategies. When practitioners consider wielding soft power through pubic diplomacy, they treat soft power as an instrument capable of exerting power over publics and, therefore, will utilize either a mediated approach or integrated approach to public diplomacy. On the other hand, when practitioners focus on the empowerment of publics, they are likely to turn to relational approach and network and collaborative approach to public diplomacy, yielding soft power as a result.

Whether soft power is used as an instrument or an outcome public diplomacy, it rests on "the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals" (Nye, 2004, p. x).

Therefore, it is important to examine assumptions of what constitute a soft power source.

<center>*Sources of Soft Power*</center>

Nye (2004) suggested three main sources of a country's soft power: its culture (only the appealing parts of culture), its values (when values are widely accepted and implemented), and its foreign policies (when perceived as legitimate). He argued that "many of the effects of culture, for better or worse, are outside the control of government" (Nye, 2004, p. 266). Domestic values are also outside of direct government control. The only source of soft power that can be considered to be under government control is foreign policies.

Foreign policy. Soft power generated from foreign policies can be regarded as the primary source through which soft power of a country can be strategically cultivated, at least in theory (Rugh, 2009). Nye (2004) argued that the attractiveness of a country "depends very much upon the values we express through the substance and style of our foreign policy," but "policies that express important values are more likely to be attractive when the values are shared" (pp. 60-61). As an example, Lundestad (1998) explained the success of American soft power in Europe through shared ideals and values, such as democracy and open markets, embedded in American foreign policies directed toward Europe. The same can be applied toward Russia's soft power in the post-Soviet space, where countries have a shared history and common values (Bogomolov & Lytvynenko, 2012).

Strategically, therefore, soft power can be cultivated through foreign policies when policies include some understanding and consideration of needs and opinions of

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foreign publics (Rugh, 2009). For example, American soft power was reinforced when George Bush announced that the United States would take the lead in the fight against HIV/AIDS and increase its foreign aid (Nye, 2004). However, national interests and domestic considerations often dominate in the policy making process, overshadowing foreign public opinion (Rugh, 2009). This is where public diplomacy efforts fail, and soft power of an advocate country suffers.

Culture. Soft power generated from culture comes from many different sources including pop culture, music, literature, art, movie industry, television, news, and the Internet. Most of these soft power sources are available to foreign publics through public, private, and commercial channels (Rugh, 2009). Public diplomacy's role, in this case, is to make certain aspects of culture available where they are otherwise unavailable. For example, arts diplomacy such as VOA jazz program during the Cold War was a major public diplomacy tool (Brown, 2009).

However, it is important to remember that culture can also be a source of soft power diminution. Graber (2009) analyzed three American television entertainment programs broadcasted in the Middle East, *The West Wing, That's 70s Show*, and *Friends,* and concluded that "the images presented by the programs are distorted and portray an unrealistic picture of life in America" and "can be another reason for the continued low regard for Americans and for the United States" (p. 735). She also argued that these shows undermine American public diplomacy efforts in the Middle East and negatively affect American soft power in the region (Graber, 2009).

Nye (2013) acknowledged the danger of culture as an uncontrolled variable impacting the strength of American soft power abroad: "Hollywood often portrays

consumerism, sex, and violence, but it also promotes values of individualism, upward mobility, and freedom (including for women). These values make America attractive to many people overseas" (para. 5). This example highlights the argument that culture is outside of government control.

Values. Likewise, soft power emanating from domestic values and ideals cannot be strategically managed by the government and can equally be as detrimental as instrumental to a country's soft power. According to Nye (2004), foundational American values like democracy and human rights can serve as powerful sources of attraction because these values are incredibly appealing and seductive to people in oppressed societies. These values can only be translated into power when they are seen implemented and not just proclaimed (Wyne, 2009). At the same time, when these values are pushed down on to the foreign publics, they can deter some people as much as they can attract others (Nye, 2004). For example, the rapid and wide introduction of such American values as capitalism, consumerism, and democracy led to the disappointment and rejection of the American democracy model by the post-Soviet Russia (Orlova, 2009).

Limits of soft power sources. Despite the acknowledgment by Nye (2004) that culture and values are the sources of power that are outside of government control, practitioners often treat them as products or goods that can be marketed. In 2001, the former Secretary of State Colin Powell proclaimed to a State Department audience: "What are we doing? We're selling a product. The product we are selling is democracy" (Dumenco, 2001, para. 2). According to Kennedy and Lucas (2005), such treatment of values suggests the confluence of strategic communication and public diplomacy.

Similarly, Leonard et al. (2002) argued that values and cultural appeal of a country are public goods, which can create either an enabling or a disabling environment for individual transactions. Wolf and Rosen (2004) argued that equating values with products is a deeply flawed logic due to a misunderstanding of differences between "*private goods* and *public (or collective) goods*" (p. 5).

There are three basic distinctions between private and public goods. First, private goods such as Hollywood movies or Levi's jeans allow for an easy empirical validation that is available at low cost (Wolf & Rosen, 2004). For public goods, values such as democracy, empirical validation is difficult because "the meaning, quality, and benefits associated with these public goods largely depend on a high degree of understanding, acceptance, adoption, and practice by others, rather than by an individual acting alone" (Wolf & Rosen, 2004, p. 6).

Second, private goods can be consumed individually, but the public goods can only be consumed collectively because the actualization of benefits from public goods (value such as democracy) for an individual depends upon collective consumption by all or a majority. In other words, it is easy to sell Coca-Cola individually to a large group of people, but to sell democracy as an ideal, one needs to ensure its collective consumption.

Third, private goods are rivalrous and distinct products. The consumption of private goods by one individual does not require another to consume the same product. If a person dislikes a private good she can simply refuse to consume it. The public goods are non-rivalrous, and when one individual consumes it, the rest are not isolated

from that product. In other words, "their [public goods'] availability to one beneficiary entails their imposition on all" (Wolf & Rosen, 2004, p. 7).

Further, Rittenberg and Tregarthen (2009) argued private goods are excludable products or services, meaning that consumers may be prevented from accessing them if they do not pay for it (e.g. bus ticket, Coca-Cola, trip to Hawaii). Public goods are non-excludable products or services, and consumers have access to them without payment (e.g. democracy, public libraries).

This highlights the need to understand the mechanisms of soft power sources (culture and values specifically) and the lack of control over the worth associated with one's culture and domestic values, before one decides to strategically use domestic values and ideals to boost soft power and amplify public diplomacy efforts, as values are public goods that require collective consumption and do not allow for an easy empirical validation.

Consequently, foreign policy is the only source of soft power within government control and the only one that can be overtly managed (McDowell, 2008). By extension, public diplomacy as a strategic communication function of the government, designed to communicate and explain foreign policy, can serve as a tool for wielding soft power strategically to the benefit of the advocate state.

Attraction and Soft Power

To reiterate Nye's definition (2004), soft power is the power of attraction. Such description of soft power raises a question: what is an attraction? Solomon (2014) argued that soft power is grounded in "the political dynamics of emotion" (p. 720). He argued that to understand the soft power it is important to consider the recipient's side

and examine the affective investment of publics in the images and identities that soft power and cultural influences produce. In other words, Solomon suggested that soft power is manifested through images of identities fostered by cultural influence. Similarly, Nye (2011) argued, "the production of soft power by attraction depends upon both the qualities of the agent and how they are perceived by the target" (p. 92).

Ortony, Clores, and Collins (1990) in their book *The Cognitive Structure of Emotions* described attraction as an emotion of liking. It can also be presented as the quality of being attractive or as the ability to attract – attractiveness. According to Turban and Keon (1993), attractiveness is a perception held by the involved parties, and as such, it is a subjective experience, constructed through the communicative exchange.

Mattern (2005) suggested that there are unacknowledged assumptions about soft power as an attraction that prevent scholars and practitioners to explicate and apply soft power to theory and practice. Notably, Mattern (2005) raised the question of whether an *attraction* is a natural, *pre-existing* condition of certain countries, or if an *attraction* of a country is something that can be *cultivated* and constructed (see Table 3). This distinction corresponds to Buhmann and Ingenhoff's (2015) cognitive and affective dimensions of a country image (see mediated approach), where the cognitive component deals with beliefs about a country and the affective component deals with emotions about a country.

Nye's description of soft power as the power of attraction resonates with the description of the country image, eloquently conceptualized by Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2013, 2015). Nye (2004) stated that sources of soft power might include sports, fashion, Hollywood movies, tourism, infrastructure, economy, political system, etc.

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Although economic and military might is considered hard power, Mattern argued "soft

power should not be understood in juxtaposition to hard power but as a continuation of

it by different means" (p. 583). In other words, the attraction emanating from the

economic, political and military might of a country (hard power) serves as one of the

soft power sources. Because these sources of soft power can be used to cultivate

attraction of a country as manifest features of the country, it can be argued that these

sources of power represent the cultivating characteristics of attraction. To Buhmann and

Ingenhoff (2013, 2015) this is a cognitive dimension of a country image when

stakeholders make judgments about normative, aesthetic, and functional characteristics

of a country.

Table 3. Mapping Attraction of a Country

	Attraction as a pre-existing condition of a country	**Attraction as a cultivated attribute of a country**
Nature of soft power sources	Based on intangible soft power sources such as values, culture, democracy, human rights.	Based on tangible soft power sources such as education, sports, economy, infrastructure.
Dimension of a country image it corresponds to	Affective dimension (emotion of liking) Example: I like Russian literature. I dislike American consumerism.	Cognitive dimension consists of normative, aesthetic, functional characteristics of a country (beliefs, judgments) Example: The US is great at innovation. Russia has bad roads.

On the other hand, the soft power, according to Nye (2004), rests on "the

attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals" (p. x). This description of soft

power sources suggests that attraction of a country can be a natural, inherent

characteristic of the nation expressed through its commitment to human rights and other

values; thus inducing an emotional response from the publics (an emotion of liking, for example). According to Buhmann and Ingenhoff, this constitutes an affective component of a country's image, although it is important to note that emotions are often the result of one's beliefs/judgments (2013, 2015). Further, Nye maintained that sources of soft power such as values of democracy, human rights, and individual opportunities are extremely attractive and seductive. This seducing attraction produces co-option rather than coercion. Such conceptualization once again resonates with the Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015) affective dimension of the country image (see Table 3).

However, Nye (2004) also warned that the arrogance of soft power could destroy the real message of these values and the attraction can turn to repulsion (e.g. our values are better than your values). Case in point, Shared Values Initiative, an advertising campaign attempted to depict the life of Muslims in the United States and demonstrate underlying American values, generated such repulsion and rejection of the message because the ads were "too positive", "too good to be true" and therefore "misleading, false, and one-sided" (Armstrong, 2009; Fullerton & Kendrick, 2006; Pratkanis, 2009).

Despite the proliferation of public diplomacy approaches and recurrent debates about the role of soft power in public diplomacy, the understanding of soft power as it relates to public diplomacy and how it operates is still lacking. As outlined in Nye's original conception of soft power (2008), there are three main sources of soft power: values, culture, and policies of a country. These values, culture, and policies create an appeal or attraction that serves as a conduit for exerting soft power, while public diplomacy is thought of as an instrument that governments use to mobilize resources of

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attractiveness expressed through soft power (Nye, 2008). By doing so, public diplomacy may be enacting soft power through broadcasting "the content of a country's culture, values and policies" (Nye, 2008, p. 95) that is attractive.

While Nye and other scholar agree that soft power's major agreed-upon definition is that it is a power of attraction, existing research neglects to develop a coherent conceptualization of attraction applicable to soft power. Roselle et al. (2014) observed that the mechanisms through which soft power produces attraction and the desired outcome of influencing others to "want what you want" are not well defined. This neglect of attraction constitutes the main criticism of Nye's soft power concept (Hayden, 2012; Mattern, 2005; Solomon, 2014). Importantly, the question of how does soft power attraction occur in international relations remains open. The discussions on how to enact soft power are scarce in general and lack clear suggestions for practitioners on how to achieve it. Therefore, this dissertation attempts to address the question of *how one leverages soft power attraction for strategic outcomes*.

One such potential explanation is offered by the international relations scholars Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle (2014) who proposed to think about soft power through the lenses of strategic narratives. This dissertation adopted this approach with adjustments to satisfy the needs of this research, address the research problem and answer the research questions. The following section presents a review of relevant literature on strategic narratives, soft power, and public diplomacy to inform the theoretical framework of the study.

Theoretical Framework: Soft Power Enactment and Strategic Narratives

The term strategic narrative was introduced in response to the growing discussions of asymmetric warfare and initially represented a way to frame the domestic political debates about the "discretionary and often controversial nature of contemporary conflicts" (Freedman, 2006, p. 24). The narratives represent an alternative approach to warfare because they are focused not on eliminating the assets of the enemy but are concerned with undermining narratives that provide appeal to the enemy's ideas. Freedman (2006) defined narratives as convincing stories that describe events in a way that allows drawing definite conclusions. In other words, strategic narratives are rhetorical narratives that enact a specific interest in a story that frames issues and structures responses.

Roselle et al. (2014) argued that strategic narratives could be regarded as "soft power in the 21st century" concerned with "whose story wins" (p. 71). International relations scholars Miskimmon, O'Loughlin and Roselle (2014) proposed strategic narratives as a way to understand soft power. They defined *strategic narratives* as "a tool for political actors to extend their influence, manage expectations, and change the discursive environment in which they operate" (Miskimmon et al., 2014, p. 2). As Dimitriu (2012) argued, to be effective, narratives need to resonate with values, interests, and beliefs of the intended audiences and be based on existing ideas and values. By deliberately constructing and reinforcing the ideas that are already current, narratives offer frames for the issues and suggest responses. By doing so, narratives structure expectations and behavior of actors. According to Miskimmon et al. (2014), by structuring behavior and expectations about international actors and states narratives

exert certain influence. As such, it is a political actor's ability, or in some cases government's ability, to construct narratives that enhance the appeal of a country for foreign audiences. Similarly, this is what Nye (2004) called soft power or the power of attraction.

Likewise, Lucaites and Condit (1985) argued that narratives play a role in constructing political and social consciousness. Political elites provide meaning to the past, present, and future through relaying of narratives, because narratives usually portray a sequence of events, shaping our understanding of social and political history. As Freedman (2006) explains, "Narratives are designed or nurtured with the intention of structuring the responses of others to developing events" (p. 22). By so doing narratives convert soft power into influence by getting people "to want what you want" (Nye, 2008, p. 94).

What is narrative?

Narratives are sequential accounts of events that people produce in the form of a story. By organizing material in a chronological manner, narratives convey a coherent story about what happened (Stone, 1979; Stryker, 1996). According to Griffin (1993), narratives do not necessarily present a set of facts about the world and are not primarily concerned with the truthfulness of the account. They connect the past to the present with an assumption that the accounts of the past are rarely unbiased. Narratives are constructed through the selection of stories that are pieced together both chronologically and contextually (Stryker, 1996). They are social products developed in the context of specific social, historical and cultural locations (Griffin, 1993). Narratives are present in a variety of human communication, including literature, television dramas, political

speeches, advertisements, news releases, news reports, documentaries, and in everyday conversations (Lucaites & Condit, 1985).

Narratives focus on the actions of the individual, institutional or collective actors, both state and nonstate. The narrated story encompasses answers to questions such as what, when, where, why, how, and with what consequences something has occurred. Many explanations of events often built on narratives, because they not only tell us what happened but also rationalize why it happened in one way and not the other (Stryker, 1996). Aminzade (1992) called it *path dependence*, a type of a causal logic that bears "contingent, yet cumulative and constraining effects of past action on future possibilities" (p. 462). In other words, narratives emphasize that history (context) matters.

Narratives and Narrative Discourse

The focal point of all narrative definitions is that narratives exist in relation to events. In comparison to other forms of storytelling, like stories that can simply be about description, narratives require an actual occurrence of an event, or of an action (Abbott, 2002). Simply put, narratives can be described as a representation (stories that are told or written) of events, something that has happened. Roselle et al. (2014) argued that narratives could be presented through both verbal and non-verbal communication means and, therefore, bridge the gap between the dyadic understanding of hard and soft power concepts. As Mattern (2005) argued, soft power may represent an extension of hard power perception. For example, when a nation state implements a policy using the hard power that affects specific publics, it constitutes an event that constitutes a narrative.

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To Abbott, a narrative is a complex communication transaction that involves events, their manner of representation, and the audience. Importantly, Abbott (2002) distinguished between a narrative (a story) and narrative discourse (how the story is conveyed). If the actual event constitutes a narrative, then the representation of events constitutes a narrative discourse. In sum, the narrative is the representation of events consisting of a *story* and *narrative discourse*. Abbott defined story as an event or an action itself and narrative discourse as events retold. Notably, Abbott argued that stories "can be conveyed in a variety of media, with a variety of devices, none of which, including the device of a narrator, will necessarily be present in any particular narrative" (p. 17). A story has two components – the events and the entities involved in events. Such entities can be defined differently and can be an object or a subject of the story.

Because narratives are about events, they are defined by their temporal logic (Chatman, 1990). In other words, narratives incorporate movement through time, although the chronologic order is not necessary. According to Abbott (2002), narrative discourse is infinitely malleable, leaving up to the audience to decipher the sequence of events and ultimately the story itself: "It can expand and contract, leap backward and forward, but as we take in information from the discourse we sort it out in our minds, reconstructing an order of events that we call the story" (p. 15). In other words, narratives retell the story of events, not necessarily in chronological order; they may or may not have a narrator, yet the audience is able to reconstruct or interpret the story.

Narrative Functions and Forms

The discussion of narratives and their role in communication and applied communication fields such as public relations and public diplomacy has roots in the

rhetorical heritage of public relations. As Kent (2015) explained, storytelling is grounded in the rhetorical convention of public relations and is a staple of the public relations practices. In this sense, public relations practitioners are *homo-narrans*, or *story-telling animals* (Kent, 2015; Vasquez & Taylor, 2001), who employ their storytelling skills in different strides of practice such as crisis, branding, reputation management, as well as public diplomacy.

Describing the rhetorical roots of public relations, Heath (1992) referred to rhetoric as a clash of perspectives. These perspectives have narrative form and content that can be confirmed and modified through clashing with other narratives, creating the most satisfying narratives that later guide actions of an actor (Fisher, 1985). Importantly, rhetoric, and, by extension, narratives can be manipulative. Foss and Griffin (1995) warned that strategic persuasion "constitute a kind of trespassing on the personal integrity of others when they convey the rhetor's belief that audience members have inadequacies that in some way can be corrected if they adhere to the view point of the rhetor" (p. 3). As such, strategic narratives can be thought of as manipulative, especially in the context of soft power enactment. Therefore, multiple competing strategic narratives can "temper the privileging of an advocate's point of view" (Heath, 2000, p. 78) and contest a strategic narrative. By allowing and inviting diverse perspectives and narratives, public relations may serve as a catalyst for ensuring a healthier discursive environment.

According to Heath (2000), the rhetorical heritage of public relations highlights the role of discourse through which ideas, values, and issues are examined and contested. Through its application, public relations contributes to the public discussion

in the marketplace and public policy arena, where "values are brought to bear on economic and sociopolitical matters" (p. 69). In other words, a rhetorically rooted public relations participates in the creation of value perspective that shapes society and politics, possibly via strategic narratives.

While narratives are pervasive in our lives and are often political, not all narratives can be considered strategic. There are three general forms of narratives discussed in the literature: poetic, dialectical, and rhetorical. According to Lucaites and Condit (1985), these forms serve different narrative functions: beauty, truth, and power. These functions of narratives can be interpreted as "the display of 'beauty,' the transmission of 'truth,' and the wielding of 'power'" (p. 92). Interestingly, within the narrative discourse literature, most of the theoretical explanations of narratives originate from poetic forms of discourse, without recognizing differences in their form and function (Abbott, 2002).

As Lucaites and Condit (1985) explained, the poetic narrative is designed to delight. Its main purpose is the artistic manifestation of beauty by creating a narrative that provides pleasurable and entertaining experience. Truth and power are not central in the poetic discourse, the artistic expression of a story matters more. An example would be a historical drama that is based on historical facts but presented in a poetic way for the viewing pleasure. Many cultural products designed for public diplomacy and cultural exchanges rely on the poetic form of narratives.

The purpose of a dialectical narrative is to instruct. Its primary concern is with the discovery, revelation, and presentation of facts as truth (Lucaites & Condit, 1985). It is separated from a poetic narrative by representing a verifiable phenomenon, existing

in the outside world, unlike the artistic fiction of the poetic narrative. Dialectical

narratives are found in official reports, accounts of histories, news reports, etc.

International broadcasting efforts initiated by nation states as part of their public

diplomacy strategy largely rely on the dialectic form of narratives.

The primary goal of a rhetorical narrative is the enactment of interest to the story

through persuasion. The rhetorical form of the narrative appeals to the audience and

creates a call for action. According to Lucaites and Condit (1985), "a rhetorical

narrative is a story that serves as an interpretive lens through which the audience is

asked to view and understand the verisimilitude of the propositions and proof before it"

(p. 94). Rhetorical narratives are found in public relations materials, social advocacy,

policy briefs, white papers, and in public diplomacy materials, including international

broadcasting. Lucaites and Condit (1985) argued that through engagement and

enactment of interest, rhetorical narrative wields power by creating a shared meaning.

This is the form of the narrative that brings together our understanding of soft power

and its rhetorical construction.

A rhetorical narrative is strategic in nature because it strives to achieve a

specific goal by taking into account the target audience and the context in which it is

presented. Similarly, to Freedman (2006), strategic narratives are those that "do not

arise spontaneously but are deliberately constructed or reinforced out of the ideas and

thoughts that are already current" (p. 22). In comparison to the poetic and dialectical

narrative, the audience is at the core of the rhetorical enterprise because the goal of the

narrator is to achieve the active assent of an audience. Poetic and dialectical narratives

have broader conceptualizations of the audience since the audience does not necessarily

prevent a narrator from achieving beauty or truth. Similarly, context is also more important to the rhetorical narratives than it is for poetic and dialectical forms of discourse. Dealing with fiction and facts, poetic and dialectical narratives do not operate in a conflicting and contesting environment where competing interests are at stake. Finally, rhetorical (read: strategic) narratives that aspire to enact soft power have vested interest in its acceptance by the audience because getting publics' assent is one of its goals. This is not always the case for the poetic and dialectical narratives whose manifestation of the truth and beauty is the end goal in itself (Lucaites & Condit, 1985). The next section presents a discussion of the literature on strategic narratives.

Strategic Narratives

To advance an argument that soft power is enacted via strategic narratives, it is important to define a strategic narrative as a rhetorical narrative in its nature with specific attributes that enable a soft power enactment. In summary, strategic narratives are affected by considerations of the audiences and their expectations, the context in which they are formed, received and interpreted, and by their inherent purpose to attract attention through persuasion. To achieve persuasion through strategic narratives, narratives must emphasize certain elements or "various components of narratives must be framed in a certain way" (Miskimmon et al., 2014, p. 7).

Drawing on Burke (1969), in the description of strategic narratives Roselle et al. (2014) emphasized such characteristics of narratives as actors, context, action (conflict), and [suggested] resolution of the conflict. Actors are the characters within the narrative. In relation to strategic narratives, governments, NGOs, multinational corporations, activist organizations, terrorist organizations, experts, scientists, etc., can often be

included in strategic narratives. The context of strategic narratives is equally important as the context may define the need for a narrative, highlight expectations and justify narrative interpretation. The action refers to the events, actions or conflicts around which narratives are being shaped. Finally, the suggested resolution to an identified problem that needs solving is often part of the strategic narrative, as publics interpret the events in the context provided by the narrative with an eye for a potential solution.

In other words, because strategic rhetorical narratives exist in relation to events, these narratives may offer frames for issues and policies to structure responses of the audience. For these reasons, strategic narratives are conceptualized not as static messages but as amorphous or fluid narratives that may take on a different form depending on the narrative frame and environment in which they operate. As rhetorical narratives, strategic narratives may enact soft power by creating consensus around shared meaning.

Types of Strategic Narratives

There are three general levels of strategic narratives: international, national and issue-level narrative (Roselle, et al., 2014). International system narratives describe how the world is structured (Cold War, War on Terror, Rise of China). National narratives describe what the story of the state or nation is, what values and goals it has (USA values democracy). Issue narratives explain why a policy is needed, and how it will be effectively implemented (Voluntary Resettlement of Russian Compatriots). These narrative levels are not mutually exclusive and often have a reciprocal influence on each other.

International narratives deal with narratives that describe international issues, and to an extent, international order. For example, the narrative that describes "peaceful rise of China" may provide context for understanding the growing economic and political power of China. Strategic narratives at the national level are in essence national biographies (Berenskoetter, 2014), and critical to understanding how a state wants to be perceived (image of the nation) in the world and status it seeks. Berenskoetter (2014) described national narratives as "an experienced space (giving meaning to the past) intertwined with an envisioned space (giving meaning to the future) and delineated through horizons of experience and of possibility" (p. 3). For example, Russian narratives on the shared historical and cultural heritage within the post-Soviet space put Russia's geopolitical claims in perspective. Finally, issue-level strategic narratives provide context for governmental policies. For example, Russian cultural-humanitarian cooperation policy is presented within a larger narrative of the Russian culture to affect opinion and create positive image.

Life Cycle of Strategic Narratives

To understand how strategic narratives help enact soft power it is important to understand processes associated with the communication of strategic narratives. First, the questions of how strategic narratives are being formed need to be answered. Second, the projection of strategic narratives via different communication channels (mediated or not) needs to be addressed. Third, the reception of strategic narratives needs to be examined (Miskimmon et al., 2014).

The process of formation. Understanding the formation of strategic narratives involves understanding strategic goals and communication of the state actors. The

formation of strategic narrative by political elites is based on the premise that a political

actor is able to construct a narrative, out of the ideas already present in the environment,

to enhance its appeal for target audiences (Miskimmon et al., 2014). Political actors

may develop several strategic narratives at the same time, and, depending on the level

of impact they seeks, these narratives may focus on long- or short-term outcomes.

According to Miskimmon et al., strategic narratives that seek long-term influence are

often focused on enhancing positive image and perceptions of the country, "a process to

be measured in years" (Deibel & Roberts, 1976, p. 15). Such strategic narratives are

most likely to be delivered via public diplomacy (Miskimmon et al., 2014).

Traditionally, the formation of strategic narratives was a prerogative of political

elites, those who set agendas and develop policies (Antoniades, Miskimmon, &

O'Loughlin, 2010). With the advent of the Internet and social media, the participation

of masses in narrative formation becomes more and more possible (Zaharna, 2016). In

general, the formation of narratives occurs through deliberations among the political

elites and through the choice of language to describe and construct a policy program

(Schmidt, 2002). Often, policies serve to define and embed narratives describing

problems that should and can be addressed, and actions that should be taken and can be

achieved (Roselle, 2006). As Hayden (2012) argued, a nation-state can construct

narratives that enhance a policy appeal for foreign audiences and in support of soft

power. As such, policies are a common source of narratives that can be explored to

trace narrative formation (Miskimmon et al., 2014).

Further, foreign policy is the only soft power resource within government

control that can be overtly manipulated and managed for strategic purposes (McDowell,

2008). Similarly, Rugh (2009) argued that foreign policy is the primary source through which soft power of a country can be strategically cultivated. For this reason, foreign policies may represent a great source through which strategic narratives of the advocate state may be shaped.

   The process of projection. Narrative projection is a process through which strategic narratives of the nation states are being mediated and delivered to the target audiences. As George (2015) notes, "As one moves from the highest level of policy making to the mass public, one expects to find a considerable simplification of the set of assertions and beliefs that lend support to the legitimacy of foreign policy" (p. 19). The projection of a narrative occurs through both mediated and non-mediated communication. Mediated strategic narratives are projected via media, both traditional and new, which increases the narrative contestation as many more actors project their narratives at the same time. In general, media environment thwarts the projection of strategic narratives due to increased interactivity of the media, added actors, and diverse audiences.

   To Miskimmon et al. (2014), the projection of strategic narratives represents both challenges and opportunities for advocate states. First, the type of media conditions how a narrative should be constructed. The mode of narrative delivery matters as actors must consider how the narrative will be perceived. Second, the advocate state must take into account the environment in which their messages will be received and possibly contested. Third, the delivery of strategic narratives via public diplomacy may also affect the nature of strategic narratives.

When examining the process of strategic narrative projection, it is important to take notice of who projects and represents the narrative, and who is the guarantor (referee) of its credibility (Miskimmon et al., 2014; Nye, 2008). Narrative projections through public diplomacy and public relations efforts often highlight joint projection of strategic narratives through cooperative initiatives with business, NGOs, and cultural and sporting institutions. This needs to be taken into consideration when examining narrative projection.

The process of reception. The reception of strategic narratives is concerned with identifying the effect of a narrative on audiences (Miskimmon et al., 2014). Such impact can be measured via analysis of attitudes and opinions, but also via interpretation of the narrative by elites as expressed in the media. According to (Liao, 2017), media environment has the ability to reconfigure the way foreign policy information is being formed, collected and circulated, constituting a discursive arena for strategic narratives discussion and contestation. Miskimmon et al. (2014) described narrative contestation as narrative clash or narrative battles, when many state actors project their own narratives about international relations issues and by doing so contest each other's narrative. Narratives are often contested before audiences consume them.

This provides context of how those "audiences consume news and political information, how they compare sources and attribute credibility, and whether they discuss narratives with friends, family, or colleagues" (Miskimmon et al., p. 12). As Barry and Elmes (1997) argued, whether the narrative is accepted or not, the successfully received strategic story depends on whether it stands out among others, is persuasive, and invokes retelling. In other words, the reception of the message happens

in a discursive media environment relevant to the target publics, and does not imply acceptance of the message carried by the narrative.

Further, it is also important to take into consideration the referees of the credibility or legitimacy of the narrative and the soft power sources referenced. As Miskimmon et al. postulated "how convincing any state's narrative is depends on whether other states' narratives are more or less compelling in some way" (p. 116). The narrative reception could be preconditioned by whether or not sources of soft power were successfully communicated. When an actor accepts the legitimacy of the soft power source, by extension it accepts the influence of the soft power over him/her (See Table 2).

According to Roselle et al. (2014), understanding narrative reception implies an analysis of attitudes, opinions, and behavior before and after the narrative projection. However, to understand narrative reception it is equally important to understand how the projected narratives are being re-told by media and elites in the discursive media environment of the target state.

Strategic Narratives and Guarantors of Soft Power

Soft power is embedded in our lives through our culture and values and to leverage it, it is important to communicate and highlight these diverse soft power sources in order to wield soft power influence. As Hayden (2012) suggested, the resources such as values, culture, and policies lie within a communication domain and are vested with the rhetorical capacity of the actor. In other words, how an advocate state communicates about these resources determines whether an influence can be projected via strategic narrative and soft power can be enacted. By way of explanation,

the soft power's appeal or the power of attraction needs to be communicated in order for it to be enacted.

Table 4. Soft Power Sources, Referees, and Receivers (adopted from Nye, 2008)

Sources of soft power (Narrative formation)	Referees for credibility/legitimacy (Narrative projection)	Receivers of soft power (Narrative reception)
Foreign policies	Governments, media, IGOs	Foreign publics and governments
Domestic values and policies	Media, NGOs, IGOs	Foreign publics and governments
High culture	Governments, NGOs, IGOs	Foreign publics and governments
Pop culture	Media, markets	Foreign publics

When thinking about soft power and its appeal one needs to consider its sources. If strategic narratives have the ability to enact soft power, sources of soft power must be considered. According to Nye (2008), soft power influence that originates from different sources could have a different influence on different publics. As described earlier, soft power influence originating from different sources can have a different impact on different publics (Nye, 2008). These resources (policies, values, culture) are assets that produce attraction and ability to entice. At the level of narrative formation, one must consider and examine all potential soft power sources: foreign policies, domestic values, and culture both high and pop.

At the level of narrative projection and reception, the referees who accept or reject soft power resource as legitimate must vet the credibility of the soft power source (see Table 4). Often, referees of the soft power resources are independent and state

media, NGOs and INGOs, governments and market players (depending on the soft power source, see Table 4), who see value in those resources and the opportunity to capitalize on it. By projecting strategic narratives referencing sources of soft power, these referees have the ability to enact soft power through accepting and referencing the legitimacy of the soft power source within a strategic narrative (Nye, 2008, See Table 2).

In the words of Rugh (2009), "soft power exists whether anyone makes use of it or not" (p. 16), and as such can be thought of as an environment. Klyueva and Tsetsura (2015) argued that because soft power attraction emanates from a variety of sources it could be conceptualized as "a dynamic environment that is changing by the minute together with social, political and cultural circumstances" (p. 179). Yet, according to Roselle et al. (2014), for soft power to exist and produce the attraction its sources cannot be kept in reserve but be continuously deployed – freely exist in an environment. In other words, to enact soft power attraction, a country must channel sources of soft power through public diplomacy to project the power of attraction (Seib, 2006). However, Nye (2008) warned that attraction may or may not produce the desired policy outcome, which should be judged based on individual cases.

Research on Strategic Narratives

While the notion of strategic narratives has been floating around in the literature for quite some time, the empirical research on the subject is still quite limiting. Since Arquilla and Ronfeldt (2001) emphasized the role of narratives in social activism and suggested the narratives be used for analysis of soft power, scholars from different disciplines attempted to develop this field further. The most comprehensive framework

for analysis was introduced by Miskimmon et al. (2014). Several studies were published using their framework with a focus on the narrative projection and reception stages. For example, Hartig (2015) examined the strategic narratives that China's Confucius Institutes attempt to project. Specifically, Hartig looked at several a priori strategic narratives of China, such as rising China and peaceful China. He found that while Confucius Institute has been effective in providing knowledge about Chinese language and culture, attracting more than 100 million learners of Chinese a year worldwide, it was less successful at projecting China's strategic narratives because Confucius Institutes represent not a real China, but its corrected version (Hartig, 2015; Liu, 2014).

Similarly, Krebs (2015) conducted a longitudinal analysis of the a priori strategic narrative that he called "Cold War Consensus" (p. 809). Specifically, he found that the narrative dominance "endures as long as leading political and cultural elites continue to reproduce them, and erodes when elites publicly challenges key tenets" (p. 811). Zaharna (2016) also studied strategic narratives at the level of narrative projection and reception, by examining narrative battles on Twitter surrounding the 2014 Gaza conflict. Zaharna's study expanded literature on narrative contestation (Miskimmon et al., 2014) by arguing that "narrative contests are inherently identity battles in that narratives contain intertwined elements of identity and image" (p. 4408) and suggested to look at imagery in addition to text for studying the projection of strategic narratives.

Pamment (2014b) investigated the U.S. strategic narratives in its public diplomacy messages used to promote American foreign policies. Looking at several historical examples, Pamment argued that United States frequently utilized strategic narratives, such as Monroe Doctrine or the US winning the Cold War, for political

constructions of international relations "to define its geopolitical position in relation to other nations through discursive *spatializations* of the world" (p. 48).

In the study of strategic narratives of the European Union, Kaldor, Martin, and Selchow (2007), looked at human security narrative as an illustration of the discursive shift in the language of European security. While the researchers did not necessarily study strategic narrative projection or reception, they investigated a strategic narrative that was already present within the discursive environment and argued that this narrative served to improve the image of EU's individual nation-states, but also served to legitimize the European Union as a security actor in the world (Kaldor et al., 2007).

Szostek (2014) studied media coverage of Russia in Ukraine and found presence of Russian regional influence through favorable media coverage of Russia. Yet, Szostek was hesitant to attribute the findings to Russia's ability to exert soft power in Ukraine via strategic narratives of public diplomacy, as media outlets that covered Russia more positively had connections to Russia-based media conglomerates.

Gaps in the Literature

While strategic narratives have been gaining prominence in the communication and international relations literature, the review of available research pointed out to several gaps. Most gaps in the literature are related to the conceptualization of soft power as the power of attraction, which was addressed by highlighting the importance of communicating soft power sources in order to maintain the attraction of a country as a soft power. The suggested vehicle for communicating these diverse soft sources was introduced in the literature on strategic narratives, proposing that strategic narratives

can help enact soft power as the power of attraction via a three-step process of narrative formation, narrative projection, and narrative reception.

While the literature indicates that strategic narratives could potentially explain soft power (Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 2001; Roselle et al., 2014), the noticeable element missing from the discussions of public diplomacy approaches and the role of soft power in it is the articulation of how the enactment of soft power takes place. This dissertation argues that to enact soft power strategic the target publics must accept narratives; in other words, strategic narratives should pass through all three stages of the narrative life cycle. In addition, a discussion and understanding of how soft power and its resources can be used to exert influence, specifically through strategic narratives, needs attention. According to Hayden (2012), "soft power resources are vested with rhetorical capacity" (p. 51), yet these are not elaborated in most depictions of soft power. This dissertation bridges this gap by exploring how soft power can be enacted via strategic narratives and their development from the formation to projection, to reception, where most of the empirical gaps in the literature were identified.

First, the empirical studies of strategic narratives focus predominantly on the narrative projection, and, to an extent, narrative reception. There were no studies found that specifically investigated the stage of narrative formation. Narratives and their formation is often taken for granted in the studies of narrative projection and narrative reception, often using the a priori strategic narratives without clear indication of where these narratives come from and how and by whom they were shaped (Hayden, 2017; Pamment, 2014b; Zaharna, 2016).

Second, according to Miskimmon et al., the essence of their approach lies in providing the explanation for how narratives are used strategically in international relations. Their primary argument is that how narratives are being formed and projected in the media environment shapes the dynamics of international affairs. Miskimmon et al. particularly emphasized that strategic narratives help define the international system. The authors justify such perspectives by arguing that narratives are central to all human relations. First, narratives craft worldviews and constrain behaviors. Second, political actors attempt to use narratives strategically. Third, communication environment itself affects how narratives are communicated and flow and with what effect (2014). Importantly, while the ideas of strategic narratives have been gaining attention in public diplomacy and international communication literature, there are no studies that empirically trace the strategic narrative development from their formation to projection to reception.

Restatement of Definitions in the Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this dissertation is comprised of four foundational concepts that informed this study: public relations, public diplomacy, soft power, and strategic narratives.

Public relations here is defined as the strategic management of communication and relationships between organizations and publics.

Public diplomacy is conceptualized as a strategic public relations function of the government (Signitzer & Wamser, 2006) with the goal of communicating and explaining foreign policy of a country to global publics through available means of influence, including but not limited to strategic planning and execution of

informational, cultural and educational programming, as well as international development projects by state and non-state actors.

Soft power is treated here as the power of attraction (Nye, 2004). For soft power to exist and produce attraction, its sources cannot be kept in reserve but need to be continuously deployed and freely exist in the environment (Roselle et al., 2014).

Strategic narratives are tools for political actors to extend their influence, manage expectations, change the discursive environment in which they operate (Miskimmon et al., 2014), and, potentially, enact soft power. Public relations offers its functional capabilities to assist with crafting and projecting a strategic narrative via public diplomacy. Strategic narratives go through the stage of formation, projection, and reception (Miskimmon et al., 2014).

Research Questions

Many scholars and practitioners treat soft power as a potential tool for exerting political influence. However, the discussion of how soft power can be enacted is rather limited without clear suggestions for practitioners of how to achieve it.

The argument of this dissertation is that understanding of strategic narratives enriches one's understanding how soft power can be enacted. In brief, the phenomenon under study deals with the question of *how an actor (advocate country) can enact its soft power?* The literature review offered a potential answer – soft power of an actor (advocate country) can be enacted via strategic narratives. Arguably, to enact soft power strategic narratives must be received and accepted by the target publics; simply put, strategic narratives pass through all three stages of narrative life cycle. Also, the

projection of soft power via strategic narratives must reference different soft power sources (policies, values, and culture), embedded in strategic narratives.

To answer this question, one first must identify narratives that a state attempts to project. This is the level of *narrative formation*. The literature suggested that political actors have the ability to construct narratives that enhance the appeal of a country for foreign audiences (Miskimmon et al., 2014). Further, Freedman (2006) argued that strategic narratives do not occur naturally "but are deliberately constructed or reinforced out of the ideas and thoughts that are already current" (p. 22). This fact highlights the importance of the narrative formation stage in the study of strategic narratives, as one needs first to carefully investigate which narratives are being shaped at the government level. According to Miskimmon et al. (2014), understanding the formation of strategic narratives involves understanding strategic goals and communication of the state actors. Because strategic (national level) narratives originate with the government, it is important first to examine foundational documents of one country's foreign policy, which usually outline values and goals this policy is built upon. This study examines the Foreign Policy Doctrines of the Russian Federation to identify major strategic narratives Russia aims to project. The narrative analysis of these documents will help answer the following questions:

RQ1: What strategic narratives are embedded in the foundational (guiding) foreign policy documents of the Russian Federation?

The introduction of the foundational foreign policy documents by a state actor constituted an action that later pre-determined narrative discourse of events retold by such public diplomacy practices as Russia's international broadcasting. In other words,

strategic narratives must also be projected onto the publics of the target country. Assuming that strategic national narratives originate with the government, it is logical to examine foreign communication of the Russian government that is directed toward foreign publics (narrative projection). Particularly, it is important to explore in what shape and form narratives are presented via the medium of projection, in this case, via Russian public diplomacy efforts. Further, for strategic narratives to have the ability to enact soft power, sources of soft power must be considered and embedded within strategic narratives. According to Nye (2008), soft power influence that originates from different sources could have a different influence on different publics. These resources are assets that produce attraction and ability to entice:

RQ2a: What strategic narratives are embedded in Russia's public diplomacy efforts and in what way do these narratives manifest themselves?

RQ2b: What sources of soft power are being referenced most frequently within the projected strategic narratives of Russia?

Finally, to understand the relationship between strategic narratives and soft power it is necessary to evaluate the *reception of strategic narratives*, which is concerned with identifying the impact of strategic narratives on audiences (Miskimmon et al., 2014). Such impact can be measured via analysis of attitudes and opinions, but also via interpretation of the narrative by elites as expressed in the media:

RQ3a: What strategic narratives of Russia, identified at the narrative formation stage, can be found in the discursive media environment of the target country and in what way do these narratives manifest themselves?

RQ3b: What sources of soft power are being referenced most frequently within Russia's strategic narratives found in the discursive media environment of the target country?

RQ3c: In what way does the manifestation of strategic narratives of Russia differ at the level narrative projection and the level of narrative reception?

Chapter 3: Research Design

The general goal of this dissertation is to contribute to the available knowledge on the relationship between public diplomacy, public relations, and soft power. This dissertation strives to improve our understanding of the role of strategic narratives projected via public diplomacy in the enactment of soft power. The phenomenon under study deals with a general question of *how an actor (advocate country) can enact its soft power?* In brief, the literature review suggests a potential answer – soft power of an actor (advocate country) can be enacted via strategic narratives that can be developed and deployed via public diplomacy means by state actors. In social science, narratives are seen as consensually defined social realities that inform people's understanding of their life experiences (Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1994). The agreed-upon narratives help members of the society to interpret common experience; people who share the understanding of reality also share the understanding of a narrative and become a "rhetorical community, knit together by a common sense of purpose, agency, motivation, and action" (Garner, Sterk, & Adams, 1998, p. 63). Therefore, strategic narratives, deployed to structure the consensually defined social reality, may be enacting soft power of an advocate country by leveraging the power of appeal to its culture, values, and policies via strategic narratives. If this premise is true, one needs to investigate strategic narratives by looking at examples of strategic narratives produced by an advocate country. For example, studying how Russia attempts to exert its soft power influence via strategic narratives may offer insights into the enactment of soft power as a way of fomenting change (influence). To understand the enactment of soft power via strategic narratives, it is also important to trace the formation, projection, and

reception of strategic narratives. By doing so, the dissertation addresses gaps in the literature on strategic narratives that traditionally downplayed the narrative formation stage of strategic narratives, taking it for granted. In addition, the dissertation closes the loop by tracing strategic narratives from their inception to reception.

There were several important considerations made in designing this study. First, strategic narratives are not spontaneous but rather "deliberately constructed or reinforced out of the ideas and thoughts that are already current" (Freedman, 2006, p. 22). Such conceptualization of strategic narratives highlights the importance of the narrative formation stage. In order to study strategic narratives, one needs first to carefully investigate what narratives are being formed at the government level. Second, according to Kuchins and Zevelev (2012), political elites significantly influence the shaping of foreign policy, and Russia's foreign policy is often characterized by both continuity and change, reflected in its foundational foreign policy documents. Therefore, foreign policy documents can serve as one of the sources that reflect the formation of narratives. Third, a strategic narrative is rhetorical in nature because it strives to achieve a specific goal by taking into account the target audience and the context in which it is presented (Abbott, 2002; Lucaites & Condit, 1985). For this reason, public diplomacy materials serve as an appropriate data source and are most likely to contain strategic narratives of the government. In other words, public diplomacy projects strategic narratives of an advocate country. Fourth, while Roselle et al. (2014) suggest that understanding narrative reception often implies an analysis of attitudes and opinions before and after the narrative projection, for general publics of the target state to form an opinion or perception, those narratives must first reach the

discursive media environment of the target state. As such, narrative reception can be interpreted in the context of how "audiences consume news and political information, how they compare sources and attribute credibility, and whether they discuss narratives with friends, family, or colleagues" (Miskimmon et al., 2014, p. 12). Therefore, narrative reception can also be understood as the way projected narratives are being re-told by media and political elites of the target country.

Justification for the choice of the country. The advocate country for the study of soft power enactment via strategic narratives in this dissertation is the Russian Federation. Because the phenomenon under study in this exploratory research is hard to measure or directly observe, the researcher limited the scope of this dissertation to the case of Russia and its public diplomacy efforts.

Russia as a country of observation was chosen because of its increased activity of information dissemination and narrative projection in recent years, specifically to influence the arena of international relations and sway global view of Russia in its favor (Saari, 2014). Particularly, Russian public diplomacy efforts via international broadcaster *Russia Today* (RT) and *Sputnik News* (RIA Novosti) were noted in the Intelligence Community Assessment (ICA) report as influential. "Russia's state-run propaganda machine—comprised of its domestic media apparatus, outlets targeting global audiences such as RT and Sputnik, and a network of quasi-government trolls—contributed to the influence campaign by serving as a platform for Kremlin messaging to Russian and international audiences", report states (ICA, 2017, p. 3). As such, Russia can serve as a good case study for the purpose of informing the understanding of strategic narratives, soft power, and public diplomacy.

Based on these considerations, the dissertation is set to study the narrative

formation, narrative projection, and narrative reception to track the potential trajectory

of strategic narratives deployed by an advocate country, Russia in this case. The

following research questions, organized by the stage of narrative development, will help

explore the phenomenon under study (See Table 5).

Table 5. Summary of Research Questions

Narrative formation	Narrative projection	Narrative reception
RQ1: What strategic narratives are embedded in the foundational (guiding) foreign policy documents of the Russian Federation?	**RQ2a**: What strategic narratives are embedded in Russia's public diplomacy efforts and in what way do these narratives manifest themselves?	**RQ3a**: What strategic narratives of Russia, identified at the narrative formation stage, can be found in the discursive media environment of the target country and in what way do these narratives manifest themselves?
	RQ2b: What sources of soft power are being referenced most frequently within the projected strategic narratives of Russia?	**RQ3b**: What sources of soft power are being referenced most frequently within Russia's strategic narratives found in the discursive media environment of the target country?
		RQ3c: In what way does the manifestation of strategic narratives of Russia differ at the level narrative projection and the level of narrative reception?

Study Design

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2006), research questions define the

method of inquiry. As Table 5 indicates, research questions are grouped based on the

stage of narrative development they are investigating. This creates unique challenges

and calls for different research methods to answer the different research questions. Given the exploratory nature of this study and posed research questions, the researcher designed a study using the triangulation of methods, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to data analysis. The chosen methods were included in study design to enrich the findings, to increase its validity and to reduce bias of a single method. Triangulation is a standard method in exploratory studies that allows for cross-validation of results from either a qualitative or quantitative research (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). Fortner and Christians (2003) argued that the goal of triangulation is not only accuracy but more so a build-up of a fully rounded analysis of a phenomenon by combining multiple analytical methods.

To answer the posed research questions (see Table 5), this dissertation research was conducted in three stages. During the first stage, the study examined the strategic narratives of the Russian Federation at the phase of narrative formation. Using the grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014; Saldana, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), foundational documents of the Russian foreign policy were examined. At the second stage of narrative projection, Russian public diplomacy materials were analyzed to investigate which embedded narratives were being projected onto the publics of the target state. At this stage, content analysis was used to identify the salience of projected narratives and explore whether the projected narratives refer to any of the potential soft power sources. During the third stage of narrative reception, the study examined which strategic narratives of Russia were successfully delivered in to the discursive media environment of the target state and, specifically, in what way they manifested themselves in the media of the target country (see Figure 5).

Figure 3. Study Design

Narrative formation RQ1	Narrtaive projection RQ2 a& b	Narrative reception RQ3 a,b,c
Sources of data: Foreign policy doctrine, Cultural Diplomacy doctrine, President's executive order	**Sources of data:** Russia Today, RIA Novosti/Sputnik	**Sources of data:** New York Times, Washington Post
Method of analysis: Grounded theory (open, axial, selective coding)	**Method of analysis:** Content analysis	**Method of analysis:** Content analysis

Figure 3 depicts the research design by visually aligning the research stage with the research questions, data for analysis, and methods of analysis. The study design consists of analyzing the available data that inform narrative formation, narrative projection, and narrative reception. To answer the posed research questions, the study employs triangulation of methods to address various research needs and consists of: (1) grounded theory approach (open coding, pattern/axial coding, and selective coding) to examine the foundational foreign policy documents of Russia in order to identify strategic narratives embedded in those documents (Charmaz, 2014; Saldana, 2016); (2) content analysis of materials from the English-language media outlets that represent Russia's public diplomacy efforts at the narrative projection stage (Krippendorf, 2004;

Rawnsley, 2015); (3) content analysis of media materials found in the media of the target country to investigate the manifestation of Russia's projected narratives at the stage of narrative reception (Krippendorf, 2004); and (4) comparison analysis of findings from all research steps.

To preserve the logic of the proposed research design, the next section first describes the data and instruments used for analysis. It then proceeds to the description of the data collection and analysis in each step of the study design.

Text as Data

As argued by Grimmer and Stewart (2013), language and text is often a medium for politics. Foreign policy positions, debates on legislation, and written or broadcasted news reports document the day-to-day affairs in international relations. Political leaders often explain their views through media interviews, public addresses, position papers, etc. As such, text and textual data provide a depth of insight into the understanding of many socio-political and communication phenomena. Therefore, the primary data for this study are available textual data comprised of foreign policy documents and media materials from both Russian and U.S. sources.

The data for analysis were collected in chronological order to reflect the lifecycle of strategic narratives (see Figure 4). First, data for analysis of narrative formation were collected. This body of data consists of three foundational documents that inform Russian foreign policy: 1) Foreign Policy Doctrine (2013); 2) Addendum #1 to Foreign Policy Doctrine (2010) that covers cultural diplomacy and humanitarian cooperation; 3) National Program for Foreign Policy Execution (2012) that outlines specific programs for enactment of the Foreign Policy Doctrine. These three documents

were in Russian language and are available for download from the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (http://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/official_documents), listed under the "Foundational Documents" tab.

Second, based on the topics and narratives identified through analysis of the foreign policy documents, media articles were collected for analysis of strategic narrative projection via public diplomacy outlets of Russia such as *Russia Today* and *Sputnik News* (former RIA Novosti). Because these are two major international news outlets of the Russian government, all materials from *Russia Today* and *RIA Novosti* were in English language. Importantly, materials from the international broadcaster *Russia Today* were downloaded from its official website and represented transcripts of their on-air programming.

Because this step of analysis represents a narrative projection stage that occurs after narrative formation, the data for this step were collected for a period that chronologically followed the introduction of all strategic narratives embedded in the foundational foreign policy documents of the Russian Federation (see Figure 4). The data was collected using the keywords and key phrases identified during the analysis of data for the narrative formation and will be discussed in more details later in this chapter.

Third, to address narrative reception, the data similarly were collected chronologically after the narrative was projected. The data comprised news articles from the two leading U.S. newspapers known for their ability to shape public opinion on wide array of issues (see Gershkoff & Kushner, 2005; Jordan, 1993), such as the

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New York Times and *Washington Post*, on the topics and narratives identified in the

previous step. Similarly, the data was collected using the keywords and key phrases

identified during the analysis of data for narrative projection stage. The starting point

for the study of strategic narratives was chosen the year of 2010 when the Cultural

Diplomacy Conception was introduced. The Cultural Diplomacy Conception was

widely considered as the first attempt by Russia to systemize its public diplomacy

efforts and provide a policy framework for it (Hurn, 2016; Furman, 2015). This

document was followed by an Executive Order for Foreign Policy Execution signed by

the President of Russia and by the Foreign Policy Doctrine, introduced in 2013 (see

Figure 4).

Figure 4. Timeline of Data Collection
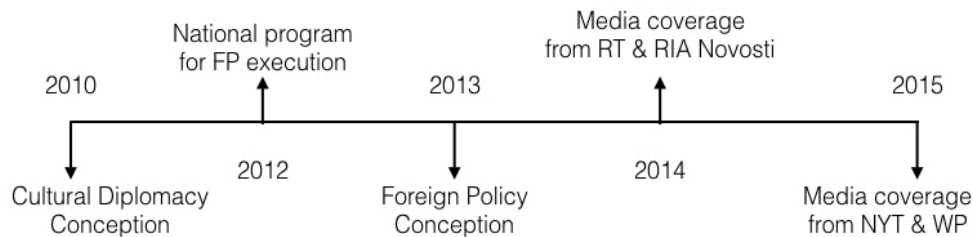
Notably, prior to 2013, a 2008 Foreign Policy Doctrine has guided Russia's

approach to international relations. In December 2016, another foreign policy document

was released that presumably may have introduced different strategic narratives.

However, this document remains outside the scope of this study because the recent date

does not allow for tracing the development of strategic narrative life cycle over the

course of two-three years.

As depicted in Figure 5, the data collection and analysis in each stage is dependent upon the completion of the previous step. Therefore, based on the narratives identified in the policy documents, a search of news items from Russia's international broadcasters was executed to identify the projected narratives. International broadcasters are widely acknowledged as public diplomacy outlets of the advocate country (Golan, 2013; Saari, 2014). In the case of Russia, *Russia Today* and *Sputnik News (RIA Novosti)* served as primary sources of data for investigating narrative projection between 2013 and 2014. This period was chosen for several reasons. First, it was theorized that chronologically it follows the period identified as part of the narrative formation stage. Second, it covers a period of two years (24 months), which allows for a time overlap between the narrative projection and narrative reception stage that can be both concurrent and consecutive. Similarly, to examine narrative reception, the data from major media outlets of the target country, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* in this case, were collected based on the narratives identified during the narrative formation analysis using the time period between 2014 and 2015 (24 months).

Figure 5. Approach to Data Collection
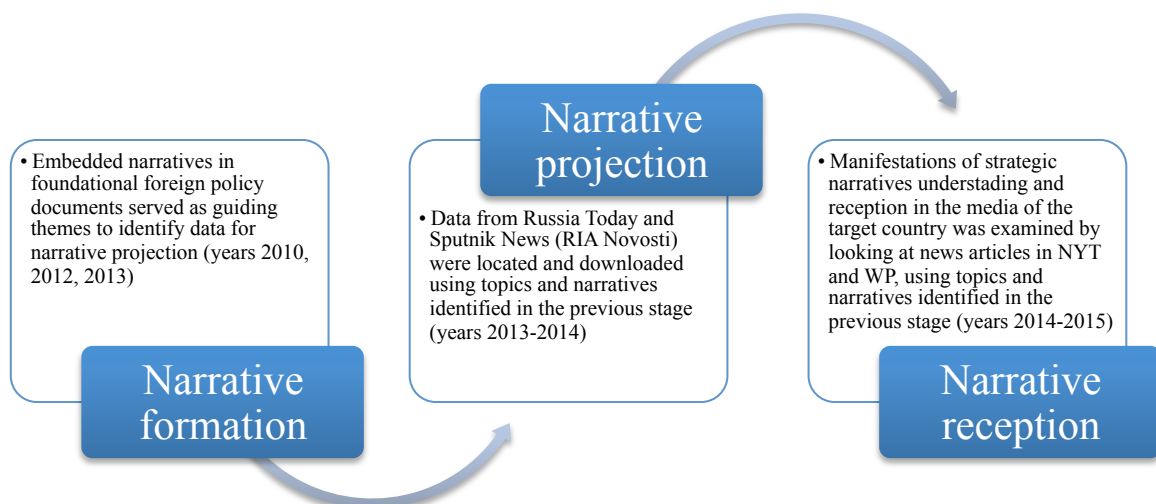
Instrumentation

The nature of the study and the study design required approaching the research questions in sequence. For this reason, each stage of the strategic narrative development was treated as the study in itself, with its own methodological approach. This dissertation relied on two general approaches to data analysis: qualitative and quantitative. Each methodological approach answered the specific research questions and used different instruments.

For qualitative analysis of data during the first stage of narrative formation, the researcher used analytic software NVivo. As software for researchers who work with rich text-based data, NVivio is called "methodologically agnostic" (Hai-Jew, 2015), and allows a researcher to do thematic analysis, grounded theory, and content analysis. The use of qualitative computer software increases the validity of research because the implementation of the computer software decreases the chances of obtaining biased results (Hai-Jew, 2015).

Because qualitative analysis requires intensive work with rich textual data, the NVivo software supports analysis by allowing to use such strategies as reading, reflecting, coding, annotating, linking and even visualizing concurrently (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). In addition, NVivo can be used as a great tool for organizing data and ideas, contributing to methodological illumination of research questions.

The content analysis of media materials was performed with the help of Qualtrics software. Although Qualtrics is a cloud-based platform for creating and distributing web-based surveys, it can also be used as a data aggregate and data editor for content analysis (Payne, Moxley, & MacDonald, 2015). Coding rubrics for content

analysis were created using Qualtrics, the link to which was used for data entry.

Essentially, for the sake of data entry, the researcher and coders filled out a "survey"

with coding structure multiple times instead of using a more traditional spreadsheet. As

Payne et al. (2015) argued, using Qualtrics for content analysis adds validity to analysis

as it allows minimizing mistakes of manual data entry.

Narrative Formation: Methodology Overview

The narrative formation stage is focused on answering one research question:

What strategic narratives are embedded in the foundational foreign policy documents of

the Russian Federation? The narrative formation analysis employed a general grounded

theory approach to identifying embedded narratives in the foundational foreign policy

documents of the Russian Federation. Importantly, the literature offers many views on

grounded theory as a methodology (Charmaz, 2014; Saldana, 2016; Strauss & Corbin,

1998), yet "all variants of grounded theory offer helpful strategies for collecting,

managing, and analyzing qualitative data" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 15). For the purpose of

this dissertation, the researcher followed strategies for qualitative data analysis offered

by Saldana (2016) and Charmaz (2014). Accordingly, the researcher engaged in an

iterative data analysis process, drawing on textual data for narratives and descriptions to

illuminate the emerged thematic categories using qualitative analysis software NVivo.

This section reports on data preparation for qualitative analysis in NVivo and describes

the coding approach used.

Data Preparation

The Russian-language documents for analysis were first downloaded as PDFs

from the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation

(http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents). To make it compatible with NVivo, all downloaded documents were then converted into MS Word format to enable full NVivo capabilities. These three documents were uploaded to a project folder titled "Narrative formation" in NVivo.

Each document has been treated as a case or unit of analysis. For additional classification and to ensure the possibility of cross-case comparison at later stages of analysis, each document was categorized based on the following "document type" attributes: government document, media documents, and year of the document.

Coding Approach

In general, coding is one of many methods to create knowledge out of a body of textual data. Corbin and Strauss (2008) defined a code as an abstract representation of a phenomenon. Codes can be descriptive (this policy is about cultural diplomacy), thematic (Russian language promotion), and interpretive or analytical (Russia's position on non-interfering in sovereign state's affairs). As Patton (2002) argued, data for coding represents the "undigested complexity of reality" (p. 463) that needs order and organization to allow for a rich interpretation. It can be achieved through the process of coding, which Bazeley and Jackson (2013) described as "tagging text with codes, of indexing it, in order to facilitate later retrieval" (p. 70). The naming of the tags or codes is an important technique as it assists in data organization and analytic thinking (Saldana, 2016). The coding approach in this study was to select, separate, and sort qualitative data through open and broad-brush coding, pattern and axial coding, and selective coding (Charmaz, 2014; Saldana, 2016).

The data analysis for narrative formation was conducted in three stages: (1) open and broad-brush coding was used to lay the foundation for identification of key themes and data; (2) pattern/axial coding was used to identify consistent topics and re-group the categories, based on connections (associations) between categories and subcategories; (3) selective coding was used to interpret the core categories emerged from all the data.

Open and Broad-Brush Coding

The initial coding – open broad-brush coding – included a close reading of the data, during which the researcher is open to all of the data interpretations. In the early stages of analysis, line-by-line coding was used. Charmaz (2014) argued that line-by-line coding is particularly useful in the early analysis and in open coding of large text data because it makes it possible to look at the data critically and to recognize underlying assumptions.

Therefore, first, the researcher read through the data several times using a broad-brush coding, making annotations and memos in NVivo to keep track of idea development. Careful reading as part of the open coding allows creating tentative labels for chunks of data that summarize observations of constantly emerging themes. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) suggested the most common approach to open coding is to start with some very general categories, describing a researcher's categorization of the text. Bazeley and Jackson (2013) described it as a broad-brush coding that allows a researcher to treat coding as a dynamic and live process, in which a researcher can re-code or code on from the already coded data. Such process places data in big chunks of broad topical areas to identify areas relevant to the investigation and creates categories that represent reflections on the text in a broad sense.

Importantly, open coding is not based on existing theory (Charmaz, 2014). The meaning emerges from the interpretation of data. NVivo allows coding themes as you go, adjust and re-code them as necessary. It also allows the researcher to record the examples of words that constitute a code or category, and establish properties of each code. In NVivo, codes are stored under nodes that contain information about the code and its properties as well as the information about *instances* or references in the text that belong to a certain code (category).

The open coding started with a careful reading of the Cultural Diplomacy Policy (2010). Bazeley and Jackson (2013) recommended starting with a document that is typical or particularly interesting and rich in details because one is likely to generate the majority of the open codes while coding the first source. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) suggested the most common approach to open coding is to start with some very general categories, describing the researcher's categorization of the text. Saldana (2016) called this approach "lumper" coding (p. 19) and Bazeley and Jackson (2013) described it as a broad-brush coding, a coding process that places data in big chunks of broad topical areas to identify areas relevant to the investigation, as well as creates categories that represent reflections on the text in a broad sense. Broad-brush, or lumper coding, allows the researcher to treat coding as a dynamic and live process, in which a researcher can recode or code on from the already coded data.

Cultural diplomacy policy was analyzed first by reading the text several times and making notes. The initial broad-brush coding of the document yielded 130 nodes (coding categories) with 523 text references. The second document to analyze was the Foreign Policy conception introduced in 2013. This document was signed into law by

the president in 2013 but has lost its power in 2016 after the new conception replaced it

(the 2016 Conception is beyond the scope of this study due to the set timeline). The

broad-brush coding of the document yielded 267 nodes (coding categories) with 680

text references. The final document to analyze was the President's order for foreign

policy execution from 2012. The analysis resulted in 112 nodes and 252 text references

(see Figure 6 for source comparison).

The initial broad-brush coding of all documents resulted in 509 unique coding

categories with 1455 text references (see Figure 6). To proceed with the further

analysis, it was important to pay particular attention to categories common across all

documents, and at least between two of them. At the first level of interpretation, this

was an important indicator for exploring further each node (open code) as well as the

text that brought it together. As Lucas et al. (2015) argued, looking at the data through

groupings of text rather than individual documents provides a stronger sense of what the

node is all about. In turn, it sets the stage for the next level of analysis.

Figure 6. Sources Compared by Number of Coding References
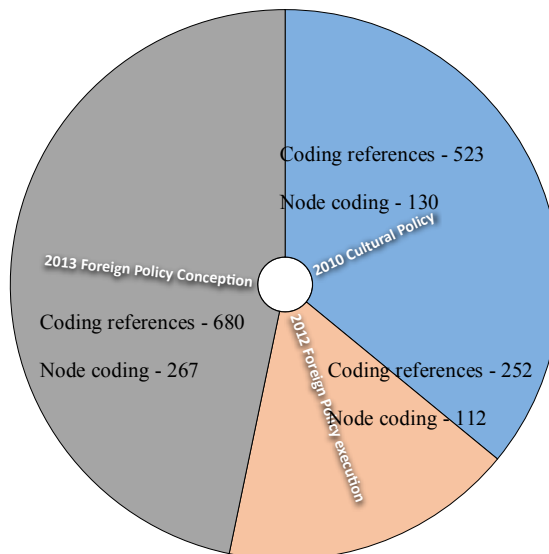
Table 6 lists 90 emerged open codes that were present in at least two analyzed documents, with only 14 categories shared by all three foundational Russian foreign policy documents. These 14 open codes (not yet categories) were used as the building blocks for axial codes. These categories are: (1) international cultural humanitarian cooperation, (2) Russian language promotion, (3) cooperation with Commonwealth of Independent States, (4) cooperation with European Union, (5) intercultural dialogue as a tool of international relations, (6) state support of Russian compatriots and Diasporas, (7) cooperation with Asia Pacific, (8) cooperation with NGOs and nonprofits, (9) cooperation with Shanghai organization, (10) ensuring Russian interest, (11) supporting Russian language and culture abroad, (12) cooperation with G8, (13) dialogue with ASEAN, (14) Rossotrudnichestvo (see Table 6).

Table 6. Initial Broad-brush Coding and Nodes Across at Least Two Documents

Nodes	Number of coding text references	Number of documents coded
International cultural-humanitarian cooperation	41	3
Russian language promotion	14	3
Cooperation with CIS	13	3
Cooperation with EU	12	3
Intercultural dialogue as a tool	11	3
State support of Russian compatriots and Diasporas	11	3
Cooperation with Asia Pacific	10	3
Cooperation with NGOs and nonprofits	8	3
Cooperation with Shanghai organization	7	3
Ensuring Russian interests	5	3
Supporting Russian language and culture abroad	5	3
Cooperation with G8	4	3
Dialogue with ASEAN	4	3
Rossotrudnichestvo	3	3
Special role of culture in FP	12	2
Cooperation with INGOs	8	2
Weapons of mass destruction	6	2
Competition of cultures	5	2
Fighting drug trafficking	5	2
ODKB - collective security agreement	5	2

Rule of Law in international relations	5	2
State support of media abroad	5	2
Bilateral cooperation	4	2
Cooperation with BRICS	4	2
Cooperation with EC	4	2
Cooperation with USA	4	2
Cultural cooperation	4	2
Eurasian economic integration	4	2
International terrorism	4	2
Non-interfering in sovereign states' affairs	4	2
Promoting Russia's image	4	2
Reputation of Russia	4	2
Rights of Russian compatriots	4	2
Russia advocates for political solutions to regional conflicts	4	2
Building friendly relations between China & India	3	2
Cooperation in Arctic	3	2
Cooperation with G20	3	2
Cooperation with Latin America	3	2
Cooperation with UN	3	2
Crisis in Afghanistan	3	2
Culture in multipolarity	3	2
Dialogue of cultures	3	2
Economic integration of CIS	3	2
Expanding Russia's shelf borders	3	2
Multilateral cooperation	3	2
NATO	3	2
Network diplomacy	3	2
Peace, security & stability	3	2
President defines cultural diplomacy policy	3	2
Shaping up of a polycentric international system	3	2
Spiritual uniqueness of the nation	3	2
Strategic partnerships in energy sector	3	2
Transnational organized crime	3	2
Unilateral sanctions	3	2
Bilateral cooperation with the USA	2	2
Constructive military cooperation with the USA	2	2
Cooperation with African countries	2	2
Cooperation with China	2	2
Cooperation with Slavic countries	2	2
Cultural diplomacy against containment policy	2	2
EC as a leading organization for cooperation & partnership	2	2
Economic discrimination	2	2
Eurasian Union as an FP priority	2	2
Expanding cooperation with Belarus in the Eurasian Union	2	2
Expanding presence in Antarctica	2	2
Finalize Russian borders	2	2
Goal commonality – NATO	2	2
Humanitarian cooperation with CIS countries	2	2
Information support of Russian FP	2	2
Modernization of Russia	2	2
Multipolarity	2	2

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Mutually beneficially relations with the USA	2	2
National and inter-ethnic conflicts	2	2
Non-discrimination in economic & trade cooperation with the USA	2	2
Non-nuclear status of Korean peninsula	2	2
Openness of Russia's FP	2	2
Political solution for Iranian nuclear program	2	2
Religion in intercultural dialogue	2	2
Representing classic Russian culture abroad	2	2
Resolving Arab-Israel conflict	2	2
Russia in the UN peacekeeping missions	2	2
Russia is multinational and multi-religious state	2	2
Russia's responsibility to maintain global and regional security	2	2
Russia's role international human rights	2	2
Spiritual and cultural potential of Russia	2	2
State support of international broadcasting in Russian	2	2
Support of Abkhazia & South Ossetia	2	2
Support of Russian citizens abroad	2	2
Support of Russian-born children abroad	2	2
Supporting Russian companies abroad	2	2

Axial Coding

This is the second level of analysis when the open codes are re-examined with the goal of identifying patterns or categories, their subcategories, and associations among them (Saldana, 2016). Strauss and Corbin (1998) observed that the process of open coding often yields too many codes or categories that need to be organized and related to each other based on shared features and axial coding might help organize the categories better. Pattern or axial coding begins during open coding when categories (emerged themes) and their subcategories (axes, characteristics or answers to questions about categories) are first identified (Charmaz, 2014; Saldana, 2016).

According to Mills, Durepos, and Wiebe (2012), axial coding helps isolate the axis, or the phenomenon, "around which differences in properties or dimensions exist" (p. 154). To achieve this, axial coding involves disaggregating and reassembling data to highlight the association between and within categories. As Strauss and Corbin explained, the term axial comes from the understanding of axis of a category. In other

words, axial coding strives to define properties and dimensions of a category via a combination of inductive and deductive reasoning.

In this dissertation, axial coding was used to explore the data further and to create connections (associations) between categories and subcategories to determine how they are related to one another. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), this strategy brings together the data that had been broken apart into specific pieces during initial coding and identifies associations between categories to answer such questions as "when, where, why, who, how, and with what consequence" (p. 125).

Axial coding, instrumentalized in NVivo as tree maps, allows organizing nodes (open codes) in trees, essentially creating a hierarchy of codes. Re-categorizing using treemaps means combining multiple nodes into one to provide a better picture of a category, what that category is comprised of, and what the embedded meaning of it is. According to Bazeley and Jackson (2013), using tree structures has a number of benefits for analysis: 1) tree structures help with organization of nodes; 2) the sorting process prompts the researcher to clarify ideas and brings conceptual clarity; 3) re-organization of nodes into tree branches helps with identifying patterns of associations between groups of nodes and contributes to the analysis. On the technical level, NVivo allows easy dragging and dropping nodes, creating links in the document yet preserving the wholeness of the document. It also saves all original text references, even after the categories are merged, and the researcher is able to see a bigger picture for analysis and interpretation.

The initial open coding of materials for this study resulted in 509 individual nodes (codes) with 1455 coded passages of text. The number of open codes made it

difficult for the researcher to digest the information and prevented from seeing the big picture. Using tree maps, the open codes were revisited with the purpose of reorganization and re-coding where necessary. Starting with the 14 largest nodes, or nodes with the most text references in them, identified during open coding (see Table 6), the researcher organized open codes into more meaningful categories. Some categories required renaming to reflect a broader meaning, while others needed disaggregating, and, in some cases recoding.

Figure 7. Tree Structure – Nodes (Categories) Compared to Number of Coding References at First Iteration
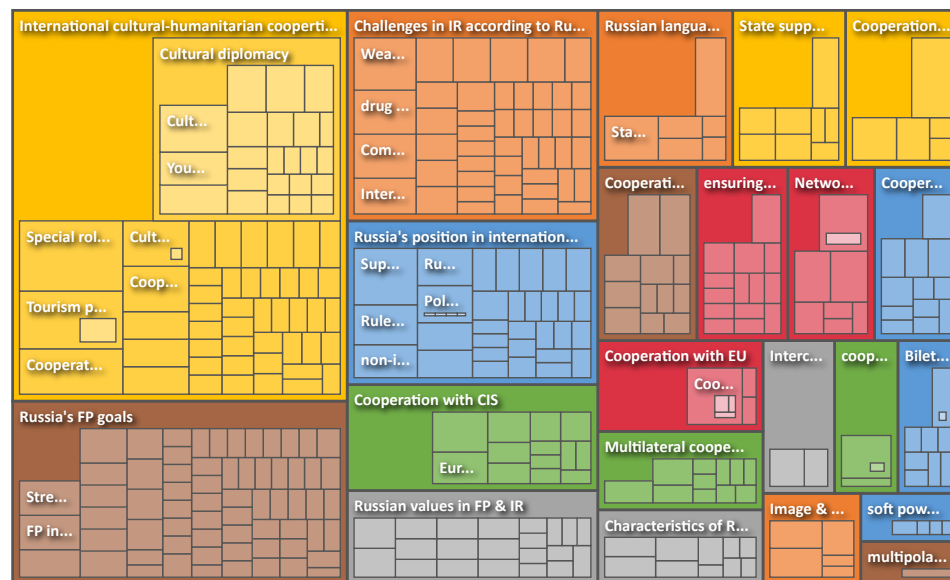
In general, axial coding is a flexible and iterative process designed to "refine and differentiate concepts that are already available and lends them the status of categories" (Bohm, 2004, p. 271). One way to perform axial coding in NVivo is through creating tree structures and iterating categories, which can be a lengthy, time-consuming process. Figure 8 visualizes the initial hierarchy and structure of categories after the first

iteration. From Figure 8, one can observe the relative size of a category as well as its internal structure with subcategories.

At the first iteration 22 raw categories emerged. The second iteration allowed creating a clearer tree organization that further highlighted the internal structure of categories with its axes (properties) and created 11 categories. At the third iteration, the tree structure was finalized, summarizing five dominating narratives across all three documents that were then subjected to selective coding and interpretation.

Selective Coding

Selective coding is the final stage of analysis that allows the researcher to interpret the core categories emerged from all the data. According to Charmaz (2014), selective coding is integrative and gives form to the axial codes collected. By doing so, selective coding helps tell a coherent analytic story, especially effective when describing narratives. When used appropriately, selective coding can specify possible relationships between categories and paint a big picture.

To aid in data interpretation, the researcher used word association maps, produced by NVivo to examine association between key characteristics of the narrative and text. These word trees essentially visualize the context in which a word or a phrase occurs. In the case of this study, word trees were created for all narratives to help the researcher further identify recurring themes surrounding the narrative. Figure 8 presents an example of a word tree used for the international cultural-humanitarian narrative.

In this dissertation, selective coding was the final stage of strategic narrative formation data analysis, describing and providing meaning to the most significant and/or reoccurring codes (Saldana, 2016). Specifically, selective coding allowed

digesting multiple codes and identifying manifest characteristics of the narrative. While

the qualitative analysis of narratives allowed for critical description and retelling of the

phenomenon of interest, the patterns, characteristics and elements that transcend the

details of the narrative were not easily captured. Therefore, axial characteristics of the

identified narratives were treated as frames that allowed identifying patterns and helped

structure large volume of information related to the narrative (Miller & Riechert, 2001;

von Gorp, 2007). However, using frames as characteristics of the narratives may have

oversimplified the complexity of the narrative, yet it captured the manifest

characteristics of that narrative, transferable for further analysis at the level of

projection and reception.

Figure 8. Word Tree Map Example

Reflexivity

All Russian foreign policy documents were in Russian. The researcher, who is a native bearer of the Russian language, read all materials in Russian with all reflective notes and categorizations made in English. In a way, reading materials in Russian and doing analysis in English provided additional opportunities for reflection and analysis as the emerged ideas needed to be simultaneously translated from Russian into English. Setton (1999) described this process as simultaneous interpretation, when a bilingual person (a researcher) reacts to the text and other forms of communication with a need for immediate interpretation by placing the translation process within the knowledge and context previously available to the researcher.

Notably, the researcher was the only person analyzing the materials presented in the original language. No back translation was performed; therefore the accuracy of translation lies within the investigator's burden. Materials were analyzed directly from the Russian language with interpretations made in English. Such an approach may have attached the researcher's subjectivity and interpretation to the text without it being clearly acknowledged. As in many qualitative research projects, coding is a subjective process (Saldana, 2016). However, as argued by Bazeley and Jackson (2013), in solo research projects subjectivity becomes an important part of analysis:

> Each person approaching the data will do so with their own goals and
> perspective, and so each will see and code differently. Coding is designed to
> support analysis – it is not the end in itself. What becomes important, then, is
> that the coder records the way he or she is thinking about the data, keeps track of

decisions made, and builds a case supported by the data for the conclusions reached (p. 93).

McCracken (1988) argued that scholars who work within their own culture should maintain a "critical distance from what they study" (p. 22) and be aware of the pitfalls associated with analysis of a familiar topic. The closeness to and familiarity of the phenomenon under study may limit the researchers' ability to be critical observers. For this reason, reflexivity in qualitative research is important. As a former journalist, public relations practitioner with experience working in public diplomacy, and a native Russian speaker, the researcher started the investigation with a certain understanding of the phenomenon under study and wider issues associated with the Russian government and government communication. Such familiarity made it particularly important to consciously observe distance from the text in order to maintain a critical awareness of the information and avoid biased attribution of meaning (McCracken, 1988).

In general, the following strategies were used to ensure distance from the text: 1) to code the text in increments; 2) slowly reading and re-reading the text; 3) to open code reflexively, creating categories with descriptive (as opposed to summative) names; and 4) to complete open (free) and broad-brush coding first before ever thinking about larger thematic categories.

Narrative Projection: Methodology Overview

The narrative projection stage investigated two research questions: 1) what strategic narratives are embedded in Russia's public diplomacy efforts and in what way do these narratives manifest themselves; and 2) what sources of soft power are most frequently referenced within the projected strategic narratives of Russia. These research

questions were answered using content analysis. Content analysis was chosen because it can be useful in exploratory studies to understand the phenomenon being studied indirectly and to retain the richness found within the text. According to Smith and Taffler (2000), content analysis may be used for a variety of purposes including theory development, hypothesis testing, and applied research.

Content Analysis

The nature of the phenomenon under study provides the researcher with limited analytical tools that can be used to answer the posed research questions. Because the study seeks to explore an abstract concept of strategic narratives and their role in the enactment of soft power, the phenomenon of interest is inaccessible in principle. In this case, content analysis can help infer the phenomenon that could not be observed directly (Berelson, 1952; Krippendorff, 2004).

The basic definition of content analysis describes it as a research technique "for making replicable and valid inferences from the text (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). As an analytical tool, content analysis is expected to be reliable and replicable and is expected to yield valid results that could be upheld in the light of independently available evidence (Berelson, 1952; Krippendorff, 2004). The basic assumption of the content analysis is that it can provide a qualitative or quantitative description of the manifest content of communication (Daniels, 1963; Krippendorff, 2004). In other words, it is an explicit measure of what is contained in the text.

Content analysis is widely employed in mass communication research, public diplomacy, and public relations. Content analysis in public relations examined positive

or negative coverage of an organization's work (Graube, Clark, & Illman, 2010), especially in crisis communication (Harlow, Brantley, & Harlow, 2010). A significant application of content analysis is found in the examination of public relations scholarship (Botan & Taylor, 2004; Sisco, Collins, & Zoch, 2011; Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzura & Jones, 2003; Taylor & Kent, 2010; Vanc & Fitzpatrick, 2016). In one of the most recent studies, researchers looked at the content of public diplomacy scholarship to determine what theoretical paradigm is dominant in public diplomacy, focusing on theoretical approaches and scholars' use of public relations theories (Vanc & Fitzpatrick, 2016). Public diplomacy scholars frequently use content analysis to investigate frames and agenda setting in the international broadcasting materials, and other public diplomacy materials (Dodd & Collins, 2017; Nisbet et al., 2004; Sheafer & Gabay, 2009). In a similar manner, this study utilized content analysis to examine public diplomacy materials and investigate whether the strategic narratives identified from the analysis of Russian foreign policy documents are being projected via Russia's public diplomacy means, such as international broadcasters.

Data Sources

The narrative projection stage investigated strategic narratives of Russia embedded in the Russian public diplomacy efforts. As Abbott (2002) argued, narratives can be conveyed in a variety of ways and through a variety of media and do not necessarily need a narrator. Therefore, media materials can serve as a good vehicle for strategic narrative delivery and are suitable for analysis. For the purpose of this dissertation, two Russian international broadcasters were chosen: *Russia Today* and *RIA Novosti* (Sputnik News). These media outlets are widely considered the main

mouthpieces of the Russian government and Russian public diplomacy (Saari, 2014; Yablokov, 2015). Both media outlets are directed toward foreign audiences and produce media materials in English for consumption of English-speaking publics. These public diplomacy media were chosen because strategic narratives first and foremost target international audiences with the goal of structuring their responses to events. It is expected that public diplomacy carry the ideology of the political elites of the advocate country, Russia in this case (Saari, 2014).

Data Collection

To be considered systematic, objective and replicable, the content for analysis must be selected according to explicit and consistent rules. First, sample selection of the target materials must observe consistent procedures, and each item must have an equal opportunity of being selected for the analysis (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006).

For the purpose of this analysis a census of all news reports that respond to the identified keywords in the period from January 1, 2013, through December 31, 2014, was sought. The beginning date was chosen for two reasons. First, 2013 is the year when the Foreign Policy Conception of the Russian Federation was introduced (signed February 12, 2013). This is also the latest document among the materials for studying the formation of strategic narratives. Therefore, chronologically covering years 2013 and 2014 allows examining whether any of the formulated strategic narratives within government documents were embedded in the public diplomacy messages of Russia.

To collect data from the *Sputnik News/RIA Novosti* the researcher used *LexisNexis Academic* database, an online database that provides access to a wide range of news, business, legal, medical, and reference databases.

Table 7. Number of Articles by Keyword in the Narrative Projection

Narrative	Keywords	N	Total
International Cultural-Humanitarian Cooperation Russian culture	Russian culture	97	
	Intercultural dialogue	1	
	International cultural cooperation	13	
	Humanitarian cooperation	10	
	Russian education	21	
	Russian tourism	18	
	Russian history	55	
			215
Russian language promotion	Russian language	260	
	Russian language discrimination	1	
	Russian language media	10	
			271
Russian compatriots	Rights of Russians	77	
	Russian World	38	
	Russian-born children	4	
			119
Russian values in FP	International peace and security	51	
	World order + Russia	35	
			86
Russia's stances in international relations	Political solutions to conflicts	13	
	Supporting the role of UN	7	
	Rule of law + Russia + international relations	25	
	Non-interference	31	
			76
		Total	767

To collect data from *Russia Today* the researcher used its official website RT.com. *Russia Today* as an international multilanguage broadcaster does not have a centralized database that would allow for easy downloading of materials for identified narratives. For this reason, the researcher manually downloaded all searched articles one by one.

Both media outlets were searched using keywords for strategic narratives identified through analysis of narrative formation, generating 767 total number of news

reports for *Sputnik News/RIA Novosti* (*N*=682) and *Russia Today* (*N*=85). Table 7 provides a break down for number of articles for each identified keyword.

Data Screening

Before being subjected to analysis, the downloaded news reports were saved in separate files and screened for irrelevant and duplicate news items. News reports containing random mentions of keywords were eliminated from the analysis. The exclusion of media reports was made in the following cases across sources: 1) random mention of the keyword in a story that is irrelevant to the topic of the investigation, and 2) a combination of words from the search key phrases in the context that does not bear the meaning of the concept (Example: Russian World Champion). Table 7 present final article count completed after data screening.

Narrative Reception: Methodology Overview

The narrative reception stage investigated two research questions: What strategic narratives of Russia, identified at the narrative formation stage, can be found in the discursive media environment of the target country and in what way do these narratives manifest themselves? What sources of soft power are being referenced most frequently within Russia's strategic narratives found in the discursive media environment of the target country? and In what way does the manifestation of strategic narratives of Russia differ at the level narrative projection and the level of narrative reception? (see Table 5). These questions were also answered using content analysis method, defined in the previous section.

Data Sources

Because narrative projection investigated the English-language public diplomacy efforts of the Russian Federation aimed at English-speaking publics, United States was chosen as a potential target country. For this reason, at the narrative reception stage the researcher sought to analyze news reports from two elite newspapers that are known to cover issues within international discourse and influence political elite opinion formation (Baum & Groeling, 2008). These newspapers included two major American newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* and were chosen for two reasons: 1) because of their extensive coverage of foreign policy news, and 2) their prominence and influence on decision making (Cohen, 2015).

Data Collection

The period for collection of media reports for the narrative reception stage was defined as January 1, 2014 – December 31, 2015. This period covered 24 months with a 12-month overlapping period between narrative projection and narrative reception stages. Such design permitted to account for potential concurrent narrative projection and reception. To collect data from *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* the researcher used *LexisNexis Academic* database, an online database that provides access to a wide range of news, business, legal, and reference databases (See Table 8). Both media outlets were searched using keywords for strategic narratives identified through analysis of narrative formation, generating a total of 184 news reports for *Washington Post* (*N*=184) and 292 news reports for *New York Times* (*N*=292).

Table 8. Number of Articles by Keyword in the Narrative Reception

Narrative	Keywords	N	Total
International Cultural-Humanitarian Cooperation Russian culture	Russian culture	37	
	Intercultural dialogue	1	
	International cultural cooperation	0	
	Humanitarian cooperation	0	
	Russian education	3	
	Russian tourism	8	
	Russian history	73	
			122
Russian language promotion	Russian language	141	
	Russian language discrimination	0	
	Russian language media	2	
			143
Russian compatriots	Rights of Russians	22	
	Russian World	15	
	Russian-born children	2	
			39
Russian values in FP	International peace and security	51	
	World order + Russia	58	
			109
Russia's stances in international relations	Political solutions to conflicts	10	
	Supporting the role of UN	3	
	Rule of law + Russia + international relations	42	
	Non-interference	8	
			63

Total   476

Data Screening

Similarly, before being subjected to analysis, the downloaded news reports were saved in separate files and screened for irrelevant and duplicate news items. News reports containing random mentions of keywords were eliminated from the analysis. The exclusion of media reports was made in the following cases across sources: 1) random mention of the keyword in a story that is irrelevant to the topic of the investigation, and 2) a combination of words from the search key phrases in the context that does not bear the meaning of the concept.

Data Coding and Operationalization of Variables

The goal of the content analysis is the accurate representation of a body of messages; therefore, both interpretation and quantification are important in fulfilling that goal since it aids researchers in the quest for precision (Rome, 1992). Media coverage can be considered as a manifestation of meaning and understanding of the issues by elites (Stemler, 2001). However, as Krippendorff (2004) argued, personal characteristics and biases of the investigator must not enter into the process of research and findings. Operational definitions and rules for the classification of variables should be explicit and comprehensive enough so that other researchers who repeat the process will arrive at the same decisions (Krippendorff, 2004). The analysis employed a detailed codebook that operationalized the variables to guide the research. The definitions in the codebook derived from the literature review presented in Chapter 2.

For the purpose of this dissertation, the researcher used deductive categories to guide the analysis. Deductive category application works with prior formulated aspects of analysis, bringing them in connection with the text (Mayring, 2000). Such approach allows for the methodologically controlled assignment of the category to a passage of text. To avoid poor description of the text, the researcher developed a set of coding rules for each deductive category, determining under what circumstances a text passage can be coded with a category (see Appendix I).

Further, coding categories or dimensions helped the researcher specify what was being sought. The application of coding categories (variables in some instances) provides their qualitative description or a quantitative measure. According to Holsti

(1969), coding categories must be independent, mutually exclusive and exhaustive. The following coding categories were used in the analysis:

Time period. The period of analysis covers two years or 24 months. Each month was coded as a separate time period. This variable was coded as a categorical variable from 1 being the January of 2014 to 24 being the December of 2015. This variable helped track and identify the change in the amount of coverage, as well as the level of salience of narrative in the news story and cited sources over time.

Number of articles. This variable represents a number of news articles dedicated to a narrative. The narrative time, time period, as well as the level of salience of the narrative in the story could precondition the number of articles.

Narrative. Because the narrated story encompasses answers to questions such as what, when, where, why, how, and with what consequences something has occurred (5W&H), most narratives in the news stories are located in the news lead (Abbott, 2002; Lucaites & Condit, 1985). Narratives like themes can be treated as coding units of analysis. This category was developed based on the narratives and themes identified during the analysis of data on narrative formation.

Source (Speaker). According to Abbott, a story has two components – the events and the entities involved in events. For analysis of news stories in the narrative projection and narrative reception stages, the events were most often presented in the news lead and answering the traditional 5W&H. The entities involved in the events were thought of as sources of information mentioned in the story. Source or the speaker in the news story was conceptualized as any person or organization quoted directly (quotation marks were used) and indirectly (paraphrased but attributed to a specific

person or organization). In other words, it is a person or an entity that presents (projects) the narrative and serves as a soft power guarantor. This category helped assess the influence of different actors and sources of information on a number of news articles dedicated to a narrative or the narrative salience. The typification of sources was captured with these 10 questions (also see Appendix I):

Domestic Government Sources:

1) Russian government official or government agency

Domestic Non-Government Sources:

2) Russian scientists/researchers/analysts

3) Russian non-governmental organization, NGOs

4) Russian public figures, such as actors

5) Other Russian sources (with no mention of business affiliation/occupation)

International Sources:

6) Non-Russian government officials or government agencies

7) Non-Russian scientists/researchers/analysts

8) Non-Russian NGOs

9) Non-Russian public figures, such as actors

10) Other non-Russian sources (with no mention of business affiliation/occupation)

Type of strategic narrative. This category identified a type of narrative being projected: 1) international, 2) national, 3) issue-level.

Sources of soft power used in the narrative. If strategic narratives indeed can enact soft power, it is important to understand what soft power sources are references or appealed to in the narrative. There are three primary sources of soft power: values,

culture, and policies. As Dimitriu (2012) argued, to be effective, narratives need to resonate with values, interests, and beliefs of the intended audiences and be based on existing ideas and values. This category coded information that referenced national values, cultural values, elements of pop or high culture, or policies.

Level of salience. To assess the prominence of a narrative present in the Russian public diplomacy efforts, the method of assessing the level of salience by Williams (2007) was adopted with modification to fit the context of the study. First, coder(s) read the whole story and then decided on the level of salience of a particular narrative on a 3-point scale with 1 being "negligible attention", which barely mentions identified narratives; 2 being "moderate attention," that devotes some attention to the identified narratives; and 3 being "significant attention," when a news story primarily focuses on the identified narrative, mentions the narrative clearly, and devotes significant part of the story to the issues relevant to the narrative.

Tone of the narrative. A tone of the narrative is important to record to understand the context in which the narrative is presented. The tone was coded on a 3 point scale, with 1 representing the tone that disfavors the narrative through the use of negative or critical words; 2 when the tone is neutral through providing or restating simple facts; 3 when the tone favors the identified narrative through the use of positive and supportive words.

Unit of Analysis

The text unit of analysis or a case was defined as an individual news item, which has natural boundaries of its own (the length of an article). Words, sentences, paragraphs or the whole news story can be used as the coding unit in the content

analysis. However, words and sentences are often considered inadequate units for analysis since they are dependent upon their context for their meaning (Krippendorff, 2004). That is, using words or sentences as units of analysis makes it difficult to determine which of several potential meanings they convey. On the other hand, using a complete story as a unit of analysis is often too intensive to detect nuances and details in the text and can divert the researcher from extracting the meaning from the content.

Similarly, defining a paragraph as the unit of analysis overcomes some of the difficulties of using sentences or the whole new stories. Paragraphs are comprised of logically connected sentences, with appropriate context provided for interpretation of ideas. However, as argued by Smith (2000), the most important aspect of the text that can be used as a coding unit is the theme "by which is meant the expression of a single idea, a statement about a topic, or a motif" (p. 321). Therefore, this dissertation uses *a theme or the previously identified narrative topic as the coding unit.*

Intercoder Reliability

Three coders conducted this content analysis. All coders were provided with a copy of the codebook, Qualtrics link to an electronic coding sheet, and electronic copies of the articles. First, the coders were briefed on the methodology, purpose of the study and asked to familiarize themselves with the coding materials. Second, three coders independently coded 13 identical articles and discussed the discrepancies in coding results. The intercoder reliability (IR) was measured using Holsti's coefficient of reliability (1969).

$$IR = 3\ M/\ N1 + N2 + N3$$

Here, M equals the number of coding decisions that all coders agreed on. The symbols N1 and N2 represent the total number of coding decisions made by coders separately from each other (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). Given the exploratory nature of the study, the minimal acceptable intercoder reliability coefficient using this formula was set at 80 percent (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005). The margin of error was left to allow for a tolerable subjective disparity in coding. Using Holsti's formula the sum of coding decisions made by all coders was calculated and amounted to 468 ((13x12)x3). Here, each coder needed to do 12 coding decisions per article (*n*=13), therefore each coder made 156 coding decisions independently. The instances where all three coders agreed amounted to 405. Therefore, the calculated intercoder reliability was determined as follows

$$IR = 405/ 156 + 156 +156 = .86.5 \text{ or } 86.5\%$$

Therefore, the intercoder reliability of 86.5% was deemed acceptable and the coders proceeded with coding the reminder of news articles. After the coding was completed, the final intercoder reliability coefficient was calculated.
The sum of coding decisions made by both coders amounted to 44,748 ((1243x12)x3). The instances where all three coders agreed amounted to 13,835. Therefore, the calculated intercoder reliability was determined as follows

$$IR = 41,505/ 20,040 + 20,040 +20,040 = .927 \text{ or } 93\%$$

Instrument Validity

According to Cook & Campbell (1979), instrument validation should precede other core empirical validations. Instrument validation refers to the adequacy with which the data collection instruments (i.e. questionnaire, interview questions, coding

categories) measure what they are intended to measure. For this purpose, the reliability, content and construct validity of the instrument was determined.

Content validity refers to the adequacy of the content of a measuring instrument and its relations to the established literature (Cronbach, 1971; Kerlinger, 1973). The coding categories for content analysis were developed through a careful review of the theoretical and empirical literature. In addition, pretest increased instrument validity by judging the relevance of each category to the properties of public diplomacy concept and improved intercoder reliability. A test study was conducted to fine-tune the coding categories and ensure their accuracy using a sample of 13 articles coded by three coders.

Construct validity is concerned with identifying whether the measures chosen are true constructs or simply artifacts of the chosen methodology (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). In this case, constructs used in the study derived from extensive review of relevant literature, as well as previously conducted study on narrative formation, and therefore are not simple artifacts of the methodology.

Data Analysis

The content analysis results were analyzed using statistical software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 24.0). The collected data were processed and analyzed using primarily descriptive statistics and cross tabulation, and non-parametric tests such as independent sample *t*-tests and bivariate correlation.

Chapter 4: Results

The results of this dissertation are presented in four sections: narrative formation, narrative projection, narrative reception, and comparative analysis of strategic narratives across stages. The first section reports the results of the qualitative analysis of Russian foreign policy documents at the level of narrative formation conducted with the purpose to identify strategic narratives that Russia can potentially project and deploy. This was the most extensive and time-consuming study one, the results of which informed two others studies of this dissertation.

The second section of this chapter reports the results of the content analysis conducted on Russian public diplomacy materials, specifically news stories from *Russia Today* and *RIA Novosti*, to discern the presence of strategic narratives of Russia, identified at the level of narrative formation. This analysis was conducted to capture the way strategic narratives manifested themselves during the process of projection. Specifically, the news stories were examined to identify the overall dominance of strategic narratives in relation to each other, the tone of the narrative, the salience of the narrative within a news story, the type of the narrative, the referenced soft power sources and the sources of information.

The third section similarly reports the results of the content analysis conducted on media materials found in the discursive environment of the target state. Specifically, materials from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* were examined to determine whether any of the projected strategic narratives of Russia reached the discursive environment of the Untied States and how these narratives manifested themselves.

Finally, the fourth section presents the results of the comparative analysis of results across stages to identify patterns, similarities, and differences.

Study One: Narrative Formation

The first study examined the process of narrative formation. Antoniades et al. (2010) argued that the formation of strategic narratives has traditionally been a prerogative of political elites, those who set agendas and develop policies. Specifically, the formation of narratives occurs through *deliberations among the political elites* and through the *choice of language to describe and construct a policy program* (Schmidt, 2002). Often, policies serve to define and embed narratives describing problems that should and can be addressed, and actions that should be taken and can be achieved (Roselle, 2006).

At the narrative formation stage three foundational documents of the Russian foreign policy were analyzed to answer the first research question designed to explore the strategic narratives embedded in the guiding foreign policy documents of the Russian Federation. The three Russian foreign policy documents chosen for analysis represent a continuous effort by Russia to build a consistent foreign policy to be communicated to the world. The documents also represent a policy development (and by extension, narrative development) over time spanning four years (2010-2013). The document "Main Directions of the Cultural and Humanitarian Cooperation of the Russian Federation," commonly known as Cultural Diplomacy Policy, was introduced in 2010. President's Order for Foreign Policy Execution, outlining foreign policy priorities and directing the development of a new comprehensive Foreign Policy Doctrine, was introduced in 2012. The Russian president approved the new Foreign

Policy Doctrine in February 2013. These three documents served as primary sources for

understanding a strategic narrative formation at the government level. Overall, utilizing

open and axial coding, the analysis revealed five major strategic narratives of Russia: 1)

international cultural-humanitarian cooperation, 2) Russia's stance on international

relations issues, 3) Russian values and priorities in foreign policy and international

relations, 4) Russian language promotion, 5) state support of Russian compatriots and

Diasporas. In addition, one more outlier category that emerged from a single category

was identified. The category appeared to be independent, emerging from a single source

and did not overtly contribute to any of the narratives (See Table 9).

Table 9. Final Categories

Category	Number of sources	Number of text references
Russian values and priorities in foreign policy and international relations	3	273
International cultural-humanitarian cooperation	3	268
Russia's stance on international relations issues	3	145
Russian language promotion	3	31
State support of Russian compatriots and Diasporas	3	26
Soft power	1	7

As Bohm (2004) explained, axial coding creates a structure with one category

located at the center with a network of associated subcategories developed around it.

These subcategories can be interpreted as elements that describe and comprise the

category per se. In what follows, this section reports the results of the axial coding,

describing and explaining the axes or subcategories along with the interpretive selective

coding that glues together and explains the potential associations and connections

between and among categories and subcategories.

Values and Priorities in Russian Foreign Policy and International Relations

The largest emerged category covered issues of values, ideals, and priorities that guide Russian foreign policy and inform Russia's decisions in international relations. Overall, characteristics of Russia's foreign policy values and priorities were grouped into 11 subcategories: 1) ensuring Russian national interests, 2) major directions in Russian foreign policies, 3) peace, security, and stability, 4) democracy and human rights, 5) common value system, 6) sustainability, 7) equality, 8) modernization of Russia, 9) shaping world order, 10) maintaining Russia's spirituality, 11) regional integration and competitiveness.

Through interpretation of textual references within these axial codes, categories were further interpreted and organized into subcategories. It can be argued that many of the characteristics of Russian foreign policy values and priorities could be potentially embedded in the narratives projected by Russian public diplomacy efforts. However, this narrative can be summarized as consisting of two essential and somewhat dependent elements that maybe regarded as both Russian foreign policy value and priority: international security and new world order. Based on the interpretation of categories, it appears that to Russia it is in its national interests to be an active player in ensuring international security and stability, yet the existing international collective security system might be exclusionary (a potential reference to NATO). Therefore, new multipolar and polycentric world order needs to be created to provide a deserving position to Russia. The structure of the narrative is visualized in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Structure of the Russian Foreign Policy Values and Priorities Narrative

New World Order
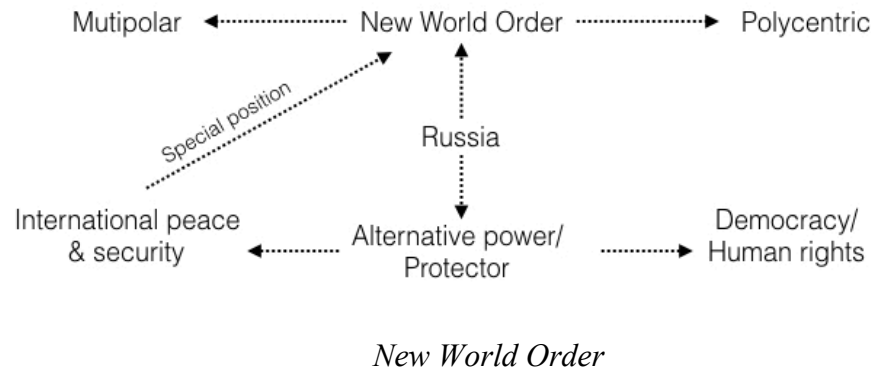
Not surprisingly, foundational foreign policy documents of the Russian

Federation discussed goals, priorities and strategies in relation to Russia's national

interests, particularly, Russia's interest in the area of international security. One of the

guiding principles of the Russian foreign policy in relation to international security

became the notion of shaping a new world order, in which Russia will get a deserving

position. The Foreign Policy Conception 2013 dedicated an entire section to the subject

under the priorities of the Russian Federation in solving global problems. The nature of

the new world order rests on the idea that stable and sustainable international relations

are only possible through the creation of an international system that is based on

international law, principles of equality, mutual respect, and non-interference in

domestic affairs. Thus, Russian foreign policy is committed to ensuring the

implementation of such system because it allows for safeguarding and guaranteeing the

equal security of every member of the world community. To Russia, therefore, the new

world order is multipolar and polycentric with international peace, security and stability

as paramount principles.

International Peace and Security

Through selective coding and interpretation of axes, Russia's concern for international security in relation to its geopolitical priorities was found to be a general thread. International security and Russia's role was treated as both the value that Russia is committed to, as well as its foreign policy priority. Often, the value of security was connected to international peace with Russia playing a pivotal role in ensuring the peace, security, and stability in the world. The documents stated that Russia carries a special responsibility to uphold the security and stability in the world following tenants and principles of international law. Further, Russia strives to extend its contributions to ensuring international peace and stability through development of a modern system of collective security where Russia would occupy a central role.

To achieve international peace and stability, Russia must focus on protecting such values and principles as human rights and democracy, yet, importantly, not allowing double standards in applications of human rights principles. Notably, Russia sees itself as a *special* protector of basic human rights and freedoms based on moral principles, without their selective interpretation. Specifically, the Foreign Policy Conception (2013) states that Russia is "committed to universal democratic values, including ensuring human rights and freedoms and sees its purpose in seeking respect for human rights and freedoms worldwide" (p. 17, §39a) and that "Russia is fully aware of its special responsibility for maintaining security in the world" (p. 8, §26). In this regard, Russia prioritizes the build-up of its position in the world as alternative power, seeking respect and international recognition.

Another value of the Russian foreign policy connected to the issues of international security was the issue of sustainability and sustainable development. To Russia, sustainable social and economic development of partner countries is an essential element of the collective security system because collective security is dependent on the balance in the political and economic development of various regions. This is highlighted as one of Russia's priorities in economic and environmental cooperation: "Russia views the sustainable socio-economic development of all countries as a necessary element of the modern collective security system" (Foreign Policy Conception, p. 17, §36). Regional economic and political integration in the network format presents a potential solution to ensuring sustainable development. Further, to address regional development misbalances, Russia is prepared to provide humanitarian cooperation and donor support.

From the three foreign policy documents of the Russian Federation, it is clear that geopolitical priorities of the Russian Federation are rooted in its ability to maintain and develop its sphere of influence. Based on the number of mentions and context of those mentions, Russia prioritizes cooperation with the following partners based on their geopolitical location: 1) cooperation with the Commonwealth of Independent States (n=40), 2) cooperation with Asia Pacific (n=26), 3) cooperation with the European Union (n=22), 4) cooperation with the United States (n=22), 5) cooperation with the United Nations (n=20), 6) cooperation through network diplomacy with INGOs (n=19) (examples: BRICS, ASEAN, Arab League), 7) cooperation with the Middle East (n=5). Obviously, the major foreign policy focus of the Russian Federation was placed on its immediate neighbors within the post-Soviet space and Asia. The Cultural

Diplomacy Conception (2012) states that "the development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States is a priority of Russia…" (p. 13), the President's Order for Foreign Policy Execution (2012) similarly prioritizes CIS, by explaining the Policy needs "to consider the development of multilateral interaction and integration processes the Commonwealth of Independent States space as a key direction of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation" (p. 2, §1d). The focus on this geopolitical region could be explained by shared geography, history, and values, allowing for the creation of a potential sphere of influence. These geopolitical priorities also indicate where and with which partners Russia can build a system of common values, such as freedoms and responsibilities, honesty, mercy, and diligence.

International Cultural-Humanitarian Cooperation

This category consisted of 12 axial codes, describing different aspects of the international cultural-humanitarian cooperation and how it can be reflected and described in the projected narratives. These subcategories were: 1) cultural diplomacy, 2) priorities of cultural-humanitarian cooperation (ICHC), 3) characteristics of Russian culture, 4) intercultural dialogue as a tool, 5) cooperation with NGOs and nonprofits, 6) structure and execution of Russia's ICHC, 7) image and reputation of Russia, 8) cooperation in education, 9) Russia's cultural influence, 10) tourism promotion, 11) preserving Russian history, and 12) public diplomacy.

Further interpretation of textual references and axial codes, presented below, allowed explaining what the structure of the narrative on international cultural-humanitarian cooperation would look like (see Figure 10). Many of these characteristics

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of international cultural-humanitarian cooperation could be potentially embedded in the

narratives projected by Russian public diplomacy efforts. To summarize, the

overarching narrative related to this category comprises of stressing the uniqueness of

Russian culture and the opportunities that it provides for improving the image and

reputation of Russia in the world. This notion can be broken down into several sub-

narratives related to Russian culture, Russian history, Russian education, and tourism as

well as intercultural dialogue.

Figure 10. Structure of International Cultural-Humanitarian Cooperation Narrative
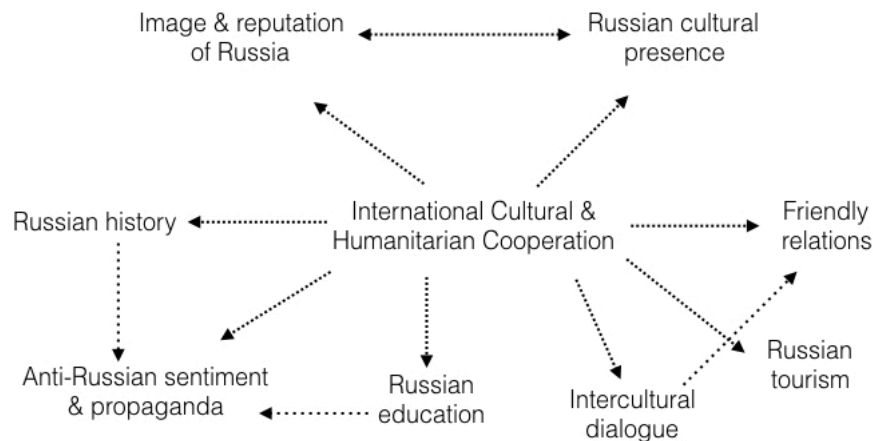
First of all, it became apparent that political elites through their choice of words

and policies to describe international cultural-humanitarian cooperation stressed the

uniqueness of the Russian culture and Russian cultural potential due to the historical

development of the country. Due to this unique position of Russian culture and Russian

historical development, Russia has ascribed a special role in its ability to facilitate

intercultural and intercivilizational dialogue. Yet, to protect its presumably unique

position, Russia aspires to fight against what it calls history falsification that is basically

an anti-Russian propaganda. To allow for a first-hand experience with the Russian culture and Russian people with the purpose of swaying their opinions, the Russian government is prepared to encourage export of Russian education and cultivate the image of Russia as a tourist destination to entice foreign visitors to visit Russia.

Humanitarian and Cultural Cooperation

International cultural-humanitarian cooperation emerged as a major theme throughout the analysis. The term alone was used 46 times across all analyzed documents. The term, often used in official Russian documents, is an umbrella term that covers a variety of concepts ranging from cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy to relief efforts to tourism promotion. The phrase "international cultural-humanitarian cooperation" often appeared in texts in relation to such words as "policy," "foreign policy strategy," "cultural relations," "public diplomacy," "mutually beneficial," and "intercultural dialogue" among others.

The international cultural-humanitarian cooperation narrative can be thought of as a strategy of Russia to wield cultural influence and create a favorable image of Russia in the world. As a strategy, Russia uses cultural and humanitarian cooperation to deploy its spiritual and cultural potential with the purpose of increasing friendly relations with foreign nations, neutralizing anti-Russian political and ideological sentiments, and strengthening Russia's international reputation. The international cultural-humanitarian cooperation first and foremost focuses on increasing the Russian cultural presence in foreign countries, as well as the foreign cultural presence in Russia, and contributes to the affirmation of Russia's position on the world stage.

As highlighted in the Cultural Diplomacy Conception 2010, mutually beneficial international cultural-humanitarian cooperation can increase the effectiveness and significantly contribute to the achievement of fundamental goals of Russia's foreign policy. Treated as a tool to influence perceptions in the world, the main purpose of the cultural-humanitarian cooperation as a foreign policy strategy is the creation and maintenance of a positive image of Russia by highlighting its achievements in culture, education, science, sports, civil society, and participation in the assistance programs to developing countries. These elements constitute some of the main attributes of the category highlighted through analysis.

One of the major characteristics, which can also be considered a distinct strategy, of the international cultural-humanitarian cooperation, was cultural diplomacy, extensively discussed in the Cultural Diplomacy Conception (2010), "Using specific forms and methods of influencing public opinion, cultural diplomacy unlike any other instrument of 'soft power' can strengthen the international authority of the country, to serve as a convincing evidence of the revival of the Russian Federation as a free and democratic state" (p. 3). While this subcategory belongs under the umbrella of cultural-humanitarian cooperation, it also has its own features. In a way, this subcategory exemplified Russia's view on cultural diplomacy. These components included cultural collaboration, exchanges, international broadcasting, and collaboration in sports. In addition, the culture was treated as marketable goods, and cultural diplomacy was ascribed a special role in foreign policy that can help counteract the containment policy: "cultural diplomacy acquires special importance in the context of [Russia's] efforts to counteract a propaganda campaign aimed at Russia's 'containment'"(p. 3). Based on the

analysis, cultural diplomacy is interpreted here as a concept that is closer in meaning to the U.S. concept of public diplomacy. Yet, such tactics as cultural exchanges, youth exchanges, educational exchanges, professional exchanges, artistic exchanges, TV and radio exchanges, and exchanges of cultural years were all attributed to cultural diplomacy. Similarly, international broadcasting and sports diplomacy also emerged as subcategories of cultural diplomacy.

In comparison, the term "public diplomacy" was used exclusively in relations to foreign policy and referred to as a function of foreign policy with a limited description or examples of tactics. The Foreign Policy Conception described Russia's public diplomacy efforts as following:

> As part of public diplomacy, Russia will seek an objective perception of itself in the world, develop its own effective means of informational influence on public opinion abroad, ensure the strengthening of the Russian mass media positions in the global information space, by providing them with the necessary state support (p. 20, §41).

The difference in approaches to cultural and public diplomacy became evident as a result of source comparison. As one can see from Figure 11, cultural diplomacy as a term has been found across all documents, where public diplomacy was found only in the Foreign Policy Conception and the President's order. As such, public diplomacy can be treated mostly as a foreign policy instrument and a resource designed to increase the effectiveness of Russian foreign policy.

Figure 11. Comparison Diagram Between Public Diplomacy Node and Cultural Diplomacy Node
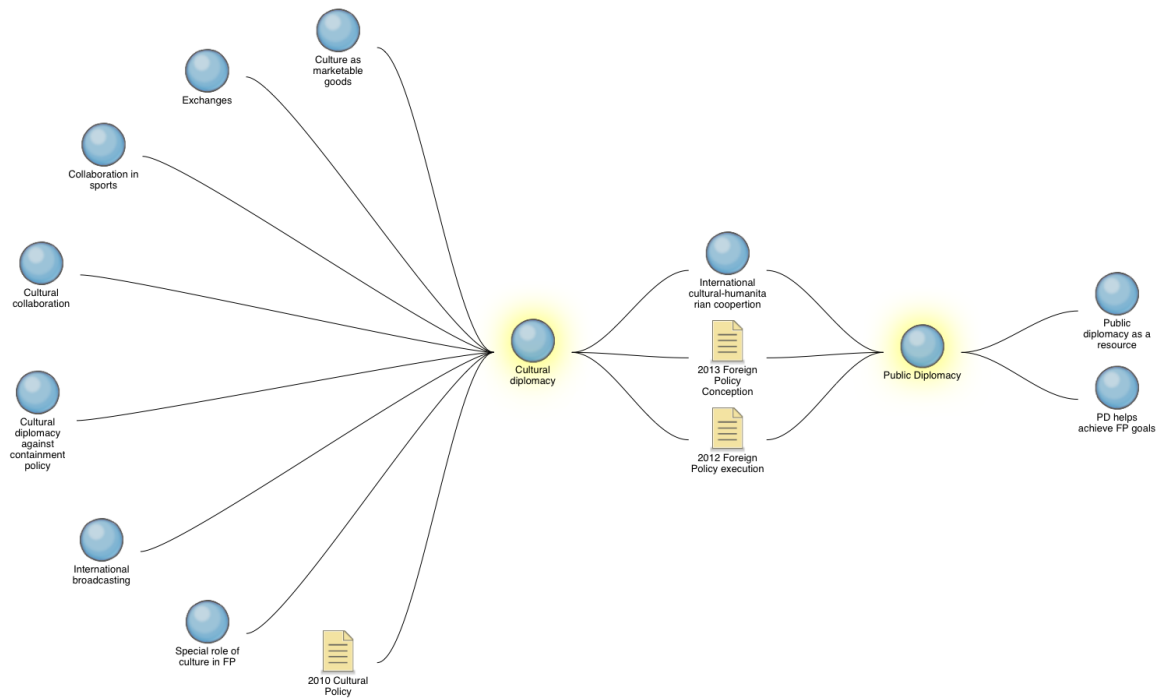
Russian Culture

Because, per description, cultural and humanitarian cooperation incorporates the relations in the field of culture and art, science and education, mass media, youth exchanges, museum cooperation, library and archives, sports and tourism, many of these fields emerged as integral characteristics of it. First, Russian culture was identified as the cornerstone feature of the cultural and humanitarian cooperation, capable of competing with others, as in "competition of cultures." To Russia, the Russian culture is unique in its position among other world cultures due to the accumulated rich spiritual and cultural heritage. In other words, by expressing a spiritual identity of the nation, the Russian culture simultaneously embodies the universal values of an entire world and also contributes to the global cultural and historical heritage. As such, Russian culture

in the foreign policy is envisioned as unique, with significant spiritual potential, originating from a multinational and multiconfessional state, and capable of offering universal values. At the same time, due to the peculiarities of historical development, Russian culture can be distinguished from others by its openness and understanding toward other cultures and nations.

A closely aligned feature of the Russian culture is the Russian language. During the analysis, the Russian language has emerged as another important and distinct strategy of the Russian foreign policy. The Cultural Diplomacy Conception declared the Russian language as a major tool for improving Russia's image and stated that the main efforts in the field of international cultural and humanitarian cooperation should be focused on supporting and popularizing the Russian language in the foreign states. For this reason, the Russian language will be discussed as a separate narrative category.

Intercultural Dialogue

In addition, international cultural and humanitarian cooperation was conceived as a means of establishing an intercultural dialogue that would ensure mutual understanding among people and nations, paying particular attention to the dialogue of religions. In this regard, Russia also sees its special mission in brokering the intercultural dialogue because being a "multinational and multi-confessional state, having centuries-old experience of harmonious coexistence of representatives of different peoples, ethnic groups and faiths" (Foreign Policy Conception, 2013, p. 7) helps Russia promote dialogue and partnership between cultures, religions, and civilizations, including through United Nations and other intergovernmental

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organizations. Importantly, Russia supports the intercultural dialogue in bilateral and multilateral formats and ascribes a special role in it to the Russian Orthodox Church.

Russian Education

An important aspect of the cultural-humanitarian cooperation from the Russia's perspective is the inclusion of Russia into the international educational space. Russia has been historically proud of its classic education model that produced many world-renowned scientists, Nobel Prize winners, writers, and public figures. Therefore, to Russia export of the Russian educational services became one of the tasks for its foreign policy. In addition, as part of its focus on the Russian education export, Russia strives for the unification of educational norms and standards in order to allow for recognition of Russian degrees and diplomas documents in other countries.

The Russian government in its foreign policy documents highlights the importance of promoting Russian education system and higher education institutions and envisions the expansion of the foreign specialists training in Russian educational institutions. Per policy, Russia is ready to allocate government scholarships for the purpose of attracting foreign students and increasing the attractiveness of education in the Russian Federation as a whole. Similar to educational exchanges programs, offered by other countries, the international cultural-humanitarian cooperation policy emphasizes collaboration with graduates of Russian universities, who often make up the political and intellectual elite of the foreign states, thus helping to build friendly relations with Russia.

Russian History

Special attention in the promotion and popularization of the Russian culture and improving the image of Russia was devoted to Russian history. Notably, foreign policy documents refer to Russian history and its preservation as the task of national importance. Specifically, the Russian government is anxious about the potential re-writing and intentional falsification of historical events to feed the anti-Russian propaganda in favor of political needs. As such, Russian government aims to encourage scientists and researchers to work on joint preparation of textbooks and teaching aids in order to ensure an objective representation of the Russian history.

In addition, the preservation and popularization of cultural monuments and historical Russian heritage sites abroad (such as burials of Russian soldiers) are elevated to the level of national importance to memorialize Russia's historical ties with foreign countries with the purpose of protecting the Russian history. Further, to promote the Russian history, special events to celebrate memorable dates of Russian history abroad must be organized.

Russian Tourism

Tourism as one of the subcategories emerged in relation to the notion of promoting mutual understanding between nations under the international cultural-humanitarian cooperation. Specifically, Cultural Diplomacy Conception 2010 ascribes an important role to Russian tourism as a tool in establishing mutual understanding between people of different countries and forming an objective view of their lives, traditions, and customs. Specifically, the policy encourages the expansion of Russia's participation in international tourist exchanges, admitting more and more foreign

tourists to the Russian Federation. To Russia, tourism can be a first-hand experience with Russian culture and Russian people, thus fostering tolerance and respect for the diversity of national, cultural, religious and moral beliefs.

Specifically, per policy, Russia should deliberately work on attracting foreign tourists to Russia, as due to its landscape and climatic diversity Russia has every opportunity to become a leading tourist power. For this purpose, informational assistance abroad can be helpful in informing potential foreign tourists about the tourism opportunities of Russia, including through participation in international tourist exhibitions abroad, and the presentation of Russia as a tourist destination.

Russian Language

This category aggregated descriptions of strategies and justification for the need of the Russian language promotion. It is comprised of the following subcategories: 1) state support for the Russian-language media abroad, 2) supporting Russian language art and culture abroad, 3) cooperation with celebrities and public figures, 4) Russian language as the language of international communication, 5) discrimination against the Russian language abroad.

Further interpretation of axial codes revealed that, overall, the discourse surrounding the narrative of Russian language promotion is organized around three topics: 1) the importance of the Russian language as a tool for social and political influence and Eurasian integration; 2) the importance of investment in Russian-language media abroad to deliver cultural products of Russia; and 3) the protection of the Russian language against discrimination among the Russian-speaking communities in the foreign countries.

The narrative of the Russian language promotion can be summarized then as the need to preserve the cultural and historical heritage of the Russian people, their identity and traditions, and most importantly the Russian language among the Russian-speaking communities of the world. Figure 12 visualizes narrative structure

Figure 12. Structure of the Russian Language Narrative

Russian Language

Russian language has been identified as one of the central topics of the conversation and the phrase was mentioned in all documents 43 times. Along with culture, the Russian language emerged as the central element of Russia's strategic cultural-humanitarian cooperation and an integral part of the Russian foreign policy, especially in relation to the countries of the former Soviet bloc. The Cultural Diplomacy Conception 2010 dedicated significant attention to the promotion and popularization of the Russian language and culture of numerous ethnicities found in Russia as an important contribution to the diversity of modern civilization.

Specifically, the discussion of the Russian language in the documents was frequently tied to the need for Russian language promotion, the Russian language

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spread beyond the traditional geographic areas, and strengthening the positions of the Russian language in the historically Russian-speaking regions: "One of the priority activities is the preservation, strengthening, development and dissemination of the Russian language as the most important means of integration of the CIS member states" (Cultural Diplomacy Conception, 2010, p. 8).

The analyzed documents offered many strategies by which to promote the Russian language, ranging from the study of the Russian language abroad to preparation of Russian language teachers. These strategies covered cooperation and cultural partnerships between cultural institutions, associations of artists and well-known individual personalities. Further, the support and creative assistance to the theaters with Russian-speaking crews help with the promotion of the Russian language. To strengthen the positions of the Russian language in the world, it is equally important to ensure the status of the Russian language as the working language of the United Nations and the language of international communication between cultures and nations.

Importantly, the Russian language is treated in the documents as a tool of social and political influence in the far and near abroad, capable of delivering favorable outcomes to the Russian foreign policy needs. Specifically, the Cultural Diplomacy Conception (2010) prioritized the Russian language by stating that "The Russian language should remain the most important tool for familiarizing other peoples with Russian and world culture, which is a considerable factor in shaping positive perceptions of Russia in the world" (p. 8).

The description of the Russian language as a foreign policy tool, emerged from the analysis of documents, stresses the Russian language as an important tool for

familiarizing people of the world with the Russian culture, history and its political traditions that can serve as a significant factor in shaping positive perceptions of Russia by the world community. Through the Russian language, a single cultural, educational and informational space can be created to satisfy the needs of Russian foreign policy, which explains the emphasis on the Russian language media in the foreign policy doctrine.

Russian Language Media

The analysis indicated that the increased state support of the media outlets that contribute to the popularization of the Russian culture and Russian language abroad as well as providing information support for various Russian cultural events is an important aspect of the Russian language promotion. In particular, the support for the broadcasting of Russian TV channels abroad, creation and operation of the satellite broadcasting systems in Russian, and distribution of the Russian press and Internet media abroad directed toward foreign audiences have been listed as strategies to assist in Russian language preservation and dissemination. As such, Russia sees the Russian-language television and radio that promote the Russian language and culture as conduits in the formation of a positive image of Russia in foreign countries.

Russian Language Discrimination

Another element emerged as an integral part of Russian language promotion was the issue of infringement on Russian language in the historically Russian-speaking regions, according to the analyzed documents. Notably, while the conception advocates the promotion of heritage of all diverse ethnic cultures and languages of the Russian Federation, Russian language is prioritized and elevated to the level of a strategic

foreign policy interest of Russia. Moreover, the document politicizes the use of Russian language by suggesting, "it is necessary to appropriately resist any attempts of infringement or discrimination against the Russian language abroad" (Cultural Diplomacy Conception, 2010, p. 9).

Overall, across all examined foreign policy document of Russia, the Russian language is described as the staple of the Russian cultural-humanitarian strategy and as the most important means for socio-political integration across the Post-Soviet space. Therefore, protecting the rights of the Russian-speaking population of foreign states in the cultural, linguistic, educational and information spheres becomes an important foreign policy priority of Russia. The issue of Russian language discrimination, thus, brings the discussion to another narrative identified through analysis.

Russian Compatriots and Russian Diasporas

This category describes concerns and approaches to maintain social and political influence by supporting Russian compatriots, Russian citizens and Russian Diasporas in foreign countries. Overall, eight subcategories emerged to explicate the meaning of the category per se. These subcategories are: 1) rights of Russian compatriots, 2) rights of Russian speakers abroad, 3) support of Russian citizens abroad, 4) support of Russian-born children abroad, 5) support of Slavic organizations, 6) access to Russian culture and media, 7) cooperation with Russian compatriots and diasporas, 8) cooperation with the Russian World.

As with other narratives, further interpretation of axial codes allowed to deduce narrative structure while pinpointing its essential characteristics. Many of the characteristics of the category describing Russian compatriots and Russian Diasporas

could be potentially embedded in the narratives projected by Russian public diplomacy efforts (see narrative structure, Figure 13). First, the discussion of Russian Diasporas and Russian compatriots abroad is often related to the issue of rights and freedoms of the Russian-speaking communities, including rights of the Russian-born children adopted abroad. Second, Russian compatriots and Diasporas collectively are described as part the Russian World – a space for historically spread out people of Russia. To summarize, the overarching narrative related to this category highlights the importance of Russian speakers within the socio-political and cultural space described as Russian world to Russian foreign policy and therefore can be treated as a potentially dominating narrative emanating from the Russian government and through its public diplomacy means.

Figure 13. Structure of the Russian Compatriots Narrative
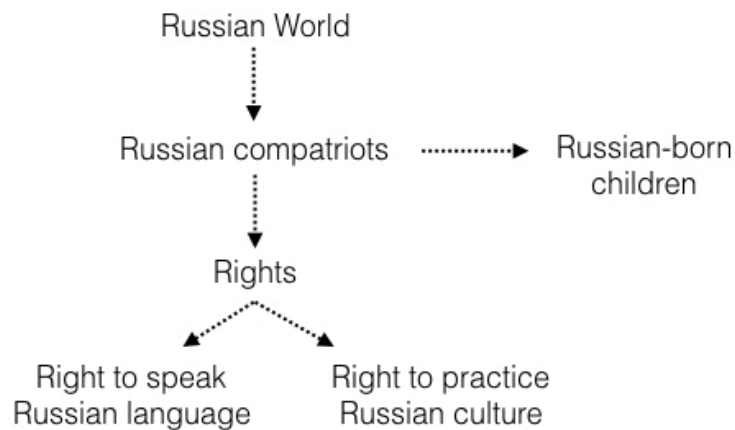
Rights of Russians

The important thread in the Russian foreign policy documents, relevant to the discussion of Russian compatriots and Russian Diasporas, was the issue of rights and freedoms of Russian citizen and Russian compatriots living abroad, as well as Russian Diasporas, including the right to speak Russian. All three documents outlined the need for providing systematic and comprehensive support to Russian compatriots, protecting the rights of Russian citizens permanently residing abroad and the rights of the Russian-speaking population. To provide a comprehensive protection of the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of Russian citizens and compatriots, the documents suggested developing legal and political approaches. Further rights of Russians and Russian-speakers were treated as basic human rights that need defending in various international formats. This includes a recommendation to develop foreign policies toward countries with the Russian-speaking population based on their treatment of the rights of Russian citizens and compatriots residing in this country. Specific reference in this regard was made toward the Baltic States where Russian government should take into account the problems of observing the rights of the Russian-speaking population.

Notably, rights of Russian compatriots and Russian Diasporas are often referred to the right to speak Russian language and to practice Russian culture. As such, forging close ties with Russian Diasporas abroad in the field of culture, education, information and other spheres of humanitarian interaction is an important foreign policy focus for the purpose of preserving the Russian language and maintaining the Russian cultural influence over the Russian-speaking population of the foreign countries. To do so, the policies recommend providing access to Russian television and radio channels, organize

performances of Russian artists and cultural figures, hold creative competitions and festivals, and also provide compatriots an opportunity to participate in similar events at the regional and international levels. Further, it is suggested to position Russia as the main educational center of the Commonwealth of Independent States by providing state scholarships to young people from the CIS countries.

Russian-born children

Russian-born children are treated as part of the Russian compatriots and therefore fall under the protection of the Russian government. Russian-born children adopted abroad were the only type of Russian compatriots that received special attention in the Russian foreign policy documents. Specifically, the documents advocated for special attention to building a solid legal framework for effectively protecting the rights and interests of Russian-born children adopted abroad, including the ratification of relevant intergovernmental agreements and the appropriate legislation of the Russian Federation governing the issue. The Foreign Policy Conception (2013) outlined the need "to expand the legal framework for international cooperation with a purpose of improving the protection of the rights and legitimate interests of Russian children living abroad" (p. 19, §39n).

Russian World (Russkiy Mir)

Notably, Russia considers the multimillion Russian diaspora and Russian compatriots abroad to constitute the Russian world (Russkiy Mir). The Russian World in its broad sense is described as a partner in the expansion and strengthening the positions of the Russian language and culture. To strengthen the Russian cultural presence in the CIS countries the foreign policy documents outline and encourage

strategies to engage with the Russian Diasporas and associations of compatriots in every possible way, including through the Forum of Slavic Cultures and other nonprofit organizations. Further, the Russian World is considered as a partner when it comes to protecting the rights and interests of compatriots living abroad on the basis of international law and international treaties of the Russian Federation. The consolidation of compatriots' organizations under the Russian World is important in order to more adequately ensure their rights in their countries of residence and to preserve the ethnocultural identity of the Russian diaspora and its links with the historical homeland.

Russia's Stances on International Relations Issues

This category represents a set of Russian statements and official position regarding international relations norms, issues, and challenges. This category also summarizes the approach and philosophy behind certain foreign policy decisions and strategy choice. Overall, the researcher identified 11 political stances of Russia, including 1) political solutions to conflicts, 2) supporting the role of UN, 3) the rule of law in international relations, 4) non-interfering in sovereign states affairs, 5) shaping up a polycentric international system, 6) collaboration on ecologic security and climate change, 7) nuclear power issues, 8) Russia's role in relations to international human rights, 9) economic interdependence, 10) militarism, and 11) challenges in international relations according to Russia.

While the characteristics of the category describing Russia's stances on international relations issues were many, yet four clearly stood out due to their interconnectedness and salience. The structure of the narrative demonstrates that, first, Russia has expressed its adherence to the principles of non-interference in the domestic

affairs of states. Second, based on this principle, Russia sees a non-alternative to political solutions to conflicts (see Figure 14). In other words, military interference to solve a crisis or a conflict is not a good solution to Russia. Third, these strong stances on non-interference and political solutions to conflicts are rooted in Russia's commitment to uphold international law and promote Rule of Law in international relations. Fourth, Russia sees United Nations as the legitimate organization that oversees and governs international relations based on international law.

Figure 14. Structure of the Russia's Stances on International Relations Issues Narrative

Political Solutions to Conflicts

One of the major foreign policy stances emerged from the analysis was Russia's insistence on political solutions to conflicts. Specifically, the analyzed foreign policy documents emphasized: "the non-alternative politico-diplomatic settlement of regional conflicts on the basis of collective actions of the international community by involving

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all interested parties in the negotiations" (Foreign Policy Conception, 2013, p. 10, §32q).

As an illustration of this position, the documents provided examples of Russian view to solving the situation around the Iranian nuclear program through dialogue on the basis of reciprocity and strict compliance with the requirements of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Further, the political solution must also be applied to such frozen conflicts as the one in Transnistria [1] with respect to sovereignty, territorial integrity and neutral status of the Republic of Moldova.

In addition, as an example of a political solution, the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia should be treated and promoted as modern democratic states. Same principles must be applied to overcoming the intra-state crises in the Middle East and North Africa by stopping violence and holding a dialogue, with respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of those states.

The justification for non-negotiable position on political solutions stems from the fact that it is impossible, according to Russia, to solve modern conflicts using power and that the solution should be sought through the involvement of all parties in the dialogue, not through their isolation. The discourse surrounding this narrative of political solutions to conflicts stresses this specific Russian position to find a settlement to the disagreements by political and diplomatic means, with strict observance of the fundamental principles of international law.

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[1] Transnisria is a secessionist country that emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It is considered a frozen conflict by Russia between the Republic of Moldova and the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (Transnistria). For more information, see Popescu (2006) and Blakkisrud and Kolsto (2011).

Rule of Law in International Relations

Interestingly, the Russian foreign policy documents underscored another clear stance of the Russian Federation on the importance of Rule of Law in international relations. The basic narrative of this position is that Russia consistently stands for strengthening the legal framework in international relations and faithfully observes international legal obligations. In fact, ensuring the international legal system is one of the priorities for Russia's work in international relations, because the rule of law in international relations is designed to ensure the peaceful and fruitful cooperation of states while balancing their interests and guaranteeing the stability of the world community as a whole.

To Russia, international law is an opportunity to leverage its position within the UN and the UN Security Council for the purpose of achieving its national interests and foreign policy goals. Specifically, through international law, Russia tries to counteract the attempts of "individual states or groups of states to revise the universally recognized norms of international law reflected in universal documents" (Foreign Policy Conception, 2013). As much as Russia seems to be supporting the rule of law, it equally strongly opposes any arbitrary interpretations of international legal norms and principles, such as the non-use of force or the threat of force, the peaceful settlement of international disputes, respect for the sovereignty of states and their territorial integrity, the right of peoples to self-determination. Russia considers such interpretations "creative" and "dangerous" (p. 10) This position is perfectly summarized in this narrative: "It is unacceptable to implement military interventions and other forms of outside interference that undermine the foundations of international law under the

pretext of 'responsibility to protect'" (Foreign Policy Conception, 2013, p. 10, §31b).

Specifically, Russia expects that the United States will be strictly guided by the norms of international law, primarily the UN Charter, including the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states.

To ensure the rule of international relations, Russia ascribes a special role to the United Nations, believing that any progressive development of international law should be primarily carried out under the auspices of the United Nations.

Supporting the Role of United Nations

Through analysis of the documents, it became clear that Russia devotes a central role to the United Nations (UN) in world affairs. To Russia, current global challenges and threats often require an adequate response and joint efforts of the international community under the central coordinating role of the United Nations, taking into account the independence in the matters of security, sustainable development, and human rights.

Russia's narrative on the role of the United Nations in international relations rests on the notion that the United Nations should remain at the heart of regulating international relations. To ensure the supremacy of international law, it is important to maintain the inviolability of the UN Charter's key provisions and principles. Specifically, it is important to preserve and strengthen Russia's position within the UN Security Council and to expand the contribution of the Russian Federation to UN peacekeeping operations. Further, UN Charter mandates the development of friendly relations between states on the basis of equality, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the principle of non-interference.

Non-Interference

Another clear stance of the Russian Federation on the issue of international relations is the support for the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs. As a narrative, this position is reflected in Russia pursuance of a policy aimed at creating a stable system of international relations based on international law and the principles of equality, mutual respect, non-interference in the internal affairs of states. Such a system is designed to ensure reliable and equal security for every member of the world community in the political, military, economic, information, humanitarian and other fields.

Summary

Overall, five major narratives emerged through analysis of the three foundational foreign policy documents of Russia. The analysis revealed narrative structure and indicated that these narratives received different degree of attention within foundational Russian foreign policy documents. The number of coded text references for each narrative allowed gauging narrative dominance at the level of narrative formation. Table 10 lists five potential narratives of Russia in a descending order.

Table 10. Narrative Dominance at the Level of Formation

Category	N of text references
Russian values and priorities in foreign policy and international relations	273
International cultural-humanitarian cooperation	268
Russia's stance on international relations issues	145
Russian language promotion	31
State support of Russian compatriots and Diasporas	26

In sum, Russian values and priorities narrative appeared to dominate at the level of narrative formation, followed closely by the international cultural-humanitarian cooperation narrative. Russia's official positions on international relations issues was third most dominant narrative within narrative formation stage, followed by the Russian language narrative. The least prominent narrative at the level of formation was the Russian compatriots narrative. Assuming that the identified narratives are important to the Russian political agenda on the international arena, these narratives and their elements have the potential to be projected on to the target audience.

Table 11. Finalized Narratives and Narrative Characteristics

Narrative	Keywords
Russian values in FP	International peace and security
	World order + Russia
International Cultural-Humanitarian Cooperation Russian culture	Russian culture
	Intercultural dialogue
	International cultural cooperation
	Humanitarian cooperation
	Russian education
	Russian tourism
	Russian history
Russia's stances in international relations	Political solutions to conflicts
	Supporting the role of UN
	Rule of law + Russia + international relations
	Non-interference
Russian language promotion	Russian language
	Russian language discrimination
	Russian language media
Russian compatriots	Rights of Russians
	Russian World
	Russian-born children

Table 11 presents a list of finalized strategic narratives of Russia, identified from analyzing Russian foreign policy documents along with narrative frames that are also used as keywords in other two studies. These keywords were suggested based on the assumption that critical description of the narrative's patterns, characteristics and elements are not easily captured. Therefore, as suggested by Stevens (2012, also see Miller & Riechert, 2001; von Gorp, 2007), axial characteristics can be treated as frames. However, it is important to remember that using frames as characteristics of the narratives may have oversimplified the complexity of the narrative, yet allowed capturing the manifest characteristics of the narratives, that can be used in further analysis of these narratives at the level of narrative projection and narrative reception.

The next section of this chapter presents results of the examination of strategic narrative at the level of narrative projection.

Study Two: Narrative Projection

The second study explored the process of strategic narrative projection. According to Miskimmon et al. (2014), the projection of a narrative can occur through both mediated and non-mediated communication. Mediated strategic narratives are projected via media, and as conceptualize in this study, often are projected via public diplomacy means namely international broadcasting. Therefore, at the level of narrative projection, this dissertation strives to answer two research questions: What strategic narratives are embedded in Russia's public diplomacy efforts and what sources of soft power are being referenced most frequently within the projected strategic narratives of Russia.

To answer these two research questions, a content analysis of media materials was conducted to identify the projected strategic narratives and referenced soft power sources. Specifically, media articles from two major Russian public diplomacy media outlets *RIA Novosti* (Sputnik) and *Russia Today* (RT) were analyzed. These articles reflected the identified in the previous section strategic narratives of Russia. The examination of the narrative projection covered the period from January 1, 2013, through December 31, 2014.

Research question 2a: Strategic narratives projection and their manifestation

Overall, 682 articles from *RIA Novosti* and 85 articles from *Russia Today* were analyzed. There was a significant growth in the number of articles containing the projected narratives between 2013 and 2014 (see Table 12). For *RIA Novosti* the increase constituted 48 %, and for *Russia Today* the coverage increased by 76.5%.

Table 12. Number of News Articles Containing Projected Strategic Narratives of Russia by Year and Source.

Narrative	RIA Novosti		Russia Today	
	2013	2014	2013	2014
International cultural-humanitarian cooperation	95	100	7	13
Russia's stance on international relations issues	12	48	4	12
Russian values and priorities in foreign policy and international relations	17	67	1	2
Russian language promotion	85	173	2	10
Russian compatriots and Diasporas	23	62	6	28
Total	232	450	20	65

Overall, 767 articles from *Russia Today* and *RIA Novosti* (Sputnik) were analyzed covering 24 months. There was a significant observable spike in articles containing projected narratives between 2013 (*N*=252) and 2014 (*N*=515). However,

two narrative themes dominated the most. First, Russian language promotion has emerged as the dominating narrative (*N*=271), with 87 articles in 2013 and 184 articles in 2014. Second, stories associated with the international cultural-humanitarian cooperation of Russia narrative were equally abundant (*N*=215), with 102 articles in 2013 and 113 articles in 2014 (See Table 13). Also, the narrative on Russian compatriots was quite prominent as well (*N*=119), with 30 articles in 2013 and 89 articles in 2014.

The least salient narrative in the Russian public diplomacy materials was the narrative explaining Russia's position on international relations issues (*N*=76), with only 15 article in 2013 and 61 in 2014. This narrative was preceded in frequency by the narrative covering Russian values and priorities in international relations and foreign policy (*N*=86), with 18 articles in 2013 and 68 articles in 2014.

Table 13. Cumulative Number of Articles Containing Projected Narratives in *RIA Novosti* and *Russia Today* by Year

Narrative	2013 N	2014 N	Total N
Russian values and priorities in foreign policy and international relations	18	68	86
International cultural-humanitarian cooperation	102	113	215
Russia's stance on international relations issues	15	61	76
Russian language promotion	87	184	271
State support of Russian compatriots and Diasporas	30	89	119
Total:	252	515	767

Figure 15. Line Chart Depicting Narrative Dominance by Month in *Russia Today* and *RIA Novosti* (2013-2014)
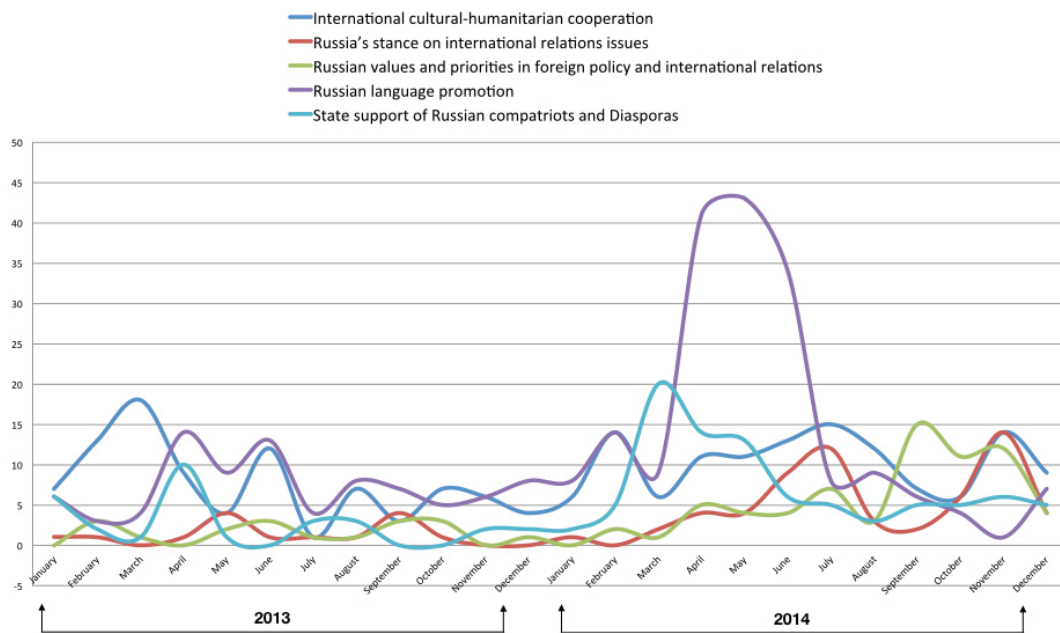
The narrative projection over 24 studied months was not equally spread out, with certain narratives emphasized more than others during certain times. As one can see from Graph 15, the dominating narrative on international cultural-humanitarian cooperation was the only narrative equally present throughout the whole period. The stories on Russian language promotion and Russian compatriots significantly spiked during the first part (March, April, May, and June) of 2014, whereas stories on Russia's values and priorities on international relations as well as Russia's position on various international relations issues spiked during the second part of the year (See Graph 15).

Similar observations were made regarding narrative density during a given month. Specifically, density is well visualized through the area charts that depict a time-series relationship. Graph 16 visualizes part-to-whole relationships helping to

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demonstrate how each narrative category contributes to the cumulative total across all projected narratives investigated in this study. As evident from an area chart, in terms of volume or narrative dominance, Russian language and international cultural-humanitarian cooperation narratives lead the media coverage by Russian international broadcasters *Russia Today* and *RIA Novosti*. Further, it appears that at any given time, the narrative discourse on international cultural-humanitarian cooperation was present in the Russian public diplomacy repertoire. At the same time, narratives on Russian official position on international relations issues and Russian values in foreign policy appeared to be gaining prominence only during a specific time period, perhaps indicating a time-bound need for them.

Figure 16. Area Chart Depicting Narrative Volume by Month in *Russia Today* and *RIA Novosti* (2013-2014)
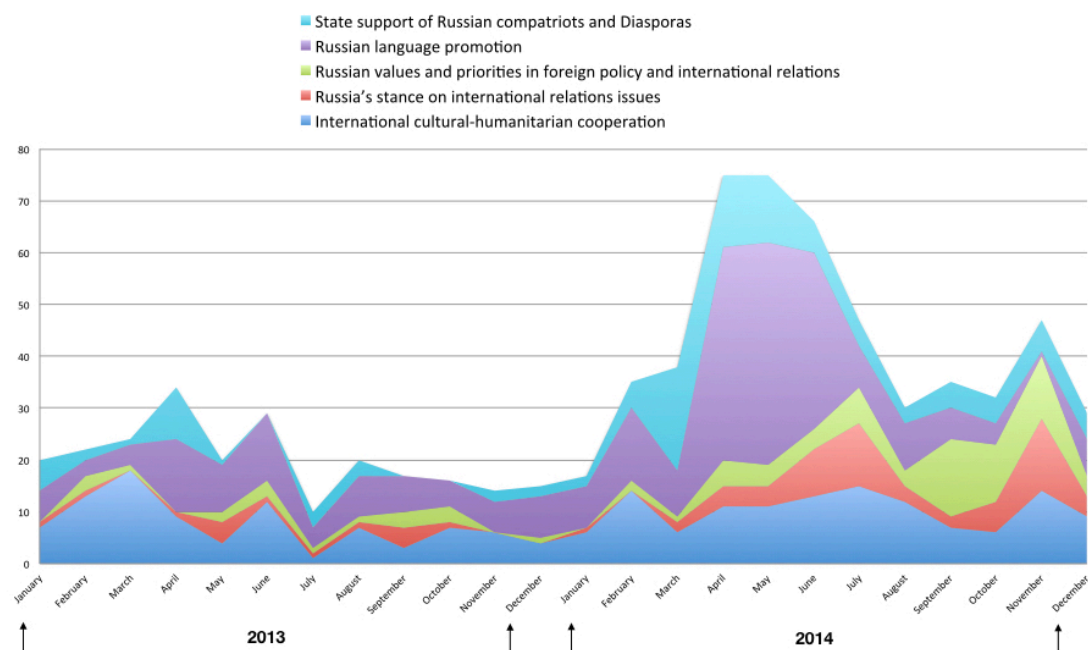
Importantly, speakers for the narrative or sources of information in public diplomacy materials varied across narratives (see Table 14). However, Russian government officials or representatives of a government agency dominated the majority of narratives. Specifically, Russian government's sources dominated narrative discussions on Russian compatriots and Russian Diaspora (66.4%), Russia's stances on international relations issues (59.2%), Russian values and priorities in foreign policy (46.5%), international cultural-humanitarian cooperation (43% of all news stories), and Russian language promotion (34.3%).

The second most frequent source in the identified narratives was the non-Russian government officials, such as representatives of other governments such as the U.S. government officials or government officials of any other country. The non-Russian government sources preoccupied the narrative discourse on Russian values and priorities in foreign policy (n=24, 27.9%), Russian language promotion (n=73, 26.9%), Russia's stances on international relations issues (n=20, 59.2%), international cultural-humanitarian cooperation (n=19, 8.8%), and Russian compatriots and Russian Diaspora (n=10, 8.4%).

The Russian language promotion narrative was the only one that utilized all ten types of information sources used in the study (see Table 14). Further, such sources as Russian public figures (n=58), non-Russian publics figures (n=28), non-Russian non-governmental organizations (n=23) and other Russian sources (n=87) that were not provided proper attribution in the news articles were well represented across all five projected narratives.

Table 14. Cross-Tabulation Between Projected Strategic Narratives and Information Sources (speakers)

Information Sources	International cultural-humanitarian cooperation Frequency/Percentage	Russia's stance on international relations issues Frequency/Percentage	Russian values and priorities in foreign policy and IR Frequency/Percentage	Russian language promotion Frequency/Percentage	Russian compatriots and Diasporas Frequency/Percentage
Russian government official or government agency	93 (43.3%)	45 (59.2%)	40 (46.5%)	93 (34.3%)	79 (66.4%)
Russian scientists/researchers/analysts	5 (2.3%)	0 (0%)	7 (8.1%)	7 (2.6%)	1 (0.8%)
Russian non-governmental organization, NGOs	9 (4.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (2.6%)	2 (1.7%)
Russian public figures, such as actors	22 (10.2%)	1 (1.3%)	2 (2.3%)	23 (8.5%)	10 (8.4%)
Other Russian source (with no mention of business affiliation/occupation)	42 (19.5%)	6 (7.9%)	7 (8.1%)	22 (8.1%)	10 (8.4%)
Non-Russian government officials or government agencies	19 (8.8%)	20 (26.3%)	24 (27.9%)	73 (26.9%)	10 (8.4%)
Non-Russian scientists/researchers/analysts	6 (2.8%)	2 (2.6%)	2 (2.3%)	2 (0.7%)	0 (0%)
Non-Russian NGOs	15 (7%)	1 (1.3%)	1 (1.2%)	4 (1.5%)	2 (1.7%)
Non-Russian public figures, such as actors	4 (1.9%)	1 (1.3%)	2 (2.3%)	17 (6.3%)	4 (3.4%)
Other non-Russian sources (with no mention of business affiliation/occupation)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.2%)	23 (8.5%)	1 (0.8%)

In addition to looking into general characteristics of the projected narratives and sources of information speaking on behalf of the narrative, it was important to explore whether the narratives were manifested in a positive, neutral or negative way and whether there is any connection between tone of the narrative and level of narrative salience within a news story. Overall, most news articles displayed a neutral tone (*n*=375) in the discussion of narratives. There were 218 articles that favored the projected narrative and 174 that disfavored them. In terms of narrative salience within the news article, most articles dedicated negligible (*n*=284) to moderate attention to the narratives (*n*=253). There were 219 articles that allocated significant attention to the identified projected narratives (see Table 15).

Table 15. Tone of Articles Containing Projected Narratives in *RIA Novosti* and *Russia Today* (frequencies)

Narrative	Unfavorable tone	Neutral tone	Favorable tone	Total N
International cultural-humanitarian cooperation	46	89	80	215
Russia's stance on international relations issues	25	20	21	76
Russian values and priorities in foreign policy and international relations	32	21	33	86
Russian language promotion	27	216	28	271
Russian compatriots and Diasporas	44	29	46	119

A correlation analysis was performed to examine the connection between the tone of the narrative and the level of salience of this narrative within a news story with identified projected narrative. The analysis showed that a more favorable tone toward the embedded narrative ($r = .127, p \leq 0.00$) is significantly positively correlated with

the higher level of salience of that narrative within a news story that represents strategic public diplomacy efforts.

To answer the research question 2(a) about strategic narratives that are embedded in Russia's public diplomacy efforts and projected via two main English-language international media outlets *Russia Today* and *RIA Novosti,* this section explored the dominating narratives, their tone, and volume over the span of 24 months (2013-2014). In summary, all five narratives identified during the stage of narrative formation appeared to be projected by Russia onto the English-speaking countries. The most present narrative throughout the studied period was the narrative covering issues related to international cultural-humanitarian cooperation (*N*=215). This narrative was mostly discussed in neutral or favorable terms.

The most dominant narrative during the studied period was the narrative of the Russian language promotion (*N*=271). Importantly, this narrative experienced the greatest growth in attention between 2013 and 2014 and was mostly discussed in a neutral way. The third prominent narrative that was clearly projected via Russian public diplomacy efforts was the narrative discussing Russian compatriots and Russian Diasporas abroad (*N*=119). Notably, this narrative was discussed either in a favorable way (*n*=46) or in unfavorable way (*n*=44).

The two least dominant narratives were Russian values in foreign policy (*N*=86) and Russian official stances on the international relations issues (*N*=76). Both of these narratives were presented in a polarized manner discussed either in a favorable way (*n*=33; *n*=31 accordingly) or in an unfavorable way (*n*=32; *n*=25 accordingly).

Research Question 2b: Strategic Narratives and Sources of Soft Power at the

Level of Projection

To answer the research question 2b that asked what sources of soft power are being referenced most frequently within the projected strategic narratives of Russia, the researcher also looked and coded for three general soft power sources (Nye, 2004) that are referenced in relation to the identified narrative. As one can see from Table 16, the culture was the soft power source invoked most frequently (*n*=354) across all narratives embedded in the public diplomacy efforts of the Russian Federation. The second most frequent soft power source was policy (*n*=281), followed by values (*n*=127).

Table 16. Frequency of Soft Power Sources in Articles Containing Projected Narratives in *RIA Novosti* and *Russia Today*

Narrative	Values	Culture	Policy	Total *N*
International cultural-humanitarian cooperation	19	138	56	213
Russia's stance on international relations issues	18	2	55	75
Russian values and priorities in foreign policy and international relations	50	0	36	86
Russian language promotion	8	199	64	271
Russian compatriots and Diasporas	32	15	70	117
Total:	127	354	281	762

Notably, referenced sources of soft power varied significantly by the narrative. For example, the narrative on international cultural-humanitarian cooperation most frequently invoked culture (*n*=138) as a potential authority capable of emanating soft power. Within the narrative on Russia's official position regarding international relations issues (*n*=55) policy as a soft power source was most often used. Predictably, the narrative on Russian values and priorities in foreign policy most frequently invoked

values as a soft power source (*n=50)*, while Russian language narrative almost exclusively utilized culture (*n=199*) coupled with some policy (*n=64*). Notably, the narrative covering issues of the Russian compatriots and Russian Diasporas predominantly referred to policy (*n=70*) as a soft power source (see Table 9).

Table 17. Frequency of Soft Power Sources in Articles Containing Projected Narratives in *RIA Novosti* and *Russia Today* by Narratives and Narrative Type

Narratives	International level			National level			Issue level		
	Values	Culture	Policy	Values	Culture	Policy	Values	Culture	Policy
International cultural-humanitarian cooperation	11	**96**	40	4	14	4	4	28	12
Russia's stance on international relations issues	17	2	**52**	0	0	2	1	0	1
Russian values and priorities in foreign policy and international relations	**49**	0	35	0	0	0	1	0	0
Russian language promotion	4	40	27	4	**154**	26	0	3	11
Russian compatriots and Diasporas	26	7	**50**	2	3	3	4	5	16

The association between narratives and soft power sources became more illuminating when examined in relation to the strategic narrative type. All strategic narrative identified as a result of the narrative formation research could be used at the international, domestic or issue-level. Four out of five narratives were largely identified as international level narratives (see Table 17), except for the narrative of Russian language, which appeared to be more of a domestic-level narrative that referred predominantly to culture. The narrative of Russian compatriots and Russian Diasporas was considered an international-level narrative, presenting it from the perspective of the foreign policy. The narrative on international cultural-humanitarian cooperation was also identified as the international-level strategic narrative, appealing to culture as a

source to yield soft power. Another international-level strategic narrative was the Russian foreign policy values narrative, which balanced out policy and values as referenced soft power sources. Finally, Russia's stances on international relations represented an international-level strategic narrative, primarily referencing policy as a soft power source.

Study Three: Narrative Reception

The third study explored the process of narrative reception. The reception of strategic narratives is concerned with identifying the effects of a narrative on audiences but also with the changes in the discursive environment of the target nations (Miskimmon et al., 2014). The latter can be measured via analysis of narrative manifestation in the media. At the level of narrative reception, this dissertation aimed to answer two research questions: 1) What strategic narratives of Russia, identified at the narrative formation stage, can be found in the discursive media environment of the target country and in what way do these narratives manifest themselves? 2) What sources of soft power are being referenced most frequently within Russia's strategic narratives found in the discursive media environment of the target country?

To answer these research questions, a content analysis of media materials was conducted to identify which of the projected strategic narratives and referenced soft power sources reached the discursive environment of the receiving country. Specifically, media articles from two major U.S. newspapers *the New York Times* and *the Washington Post* were analyzed. To recognize possible narrative life cycle and trace their development, the examination of the narrative reception covered the period from

January 1, 2014 through December 31, 2015, with a one-year overlap between narrative

reception and narrative projection.

Table 18. Frequency of Russia's Strategic Narratives in the *Washington Post*

and the *New York Times* by year.

Narrative	New York Times		Washington Post		
	2014	2015	2014	2015	Total
International cultural-humanitarian cooperation	49	25	38	10	122
Russia's stance on international relations issues	34	7	10	12	63
Russian values and priorities in foreign policy and international relations	44	24	30	11	109
Russian language promotion	58	23	51	11	143
Russian compatriots and Diasporas	20	8	10	1	39
Total	205	87	139	45	476

Overall, 292 articles from *the New York Times* and 184 articles from *the*

Washington Post were analyzed. There was a significant decrease in the number of

articles containing the identified narratives, dropping from 344 articles in 2014 to 132

articles in 2015 (see Table 18). For *New York Times* the drop in narrative interest

constituted 57.5%, and for *Washington Post* the coverage decreased by 67.6%.

Research Question 3a: Strategic Narrative Reception and Their Manifestation

Among the identified projected narratives of Russia present in the media

environment of the receiving country, the Russian language narrative clearly dominated

(*N*=143). The second most dominant narrative was the international cultural-

humanitarian cooperation (*N*=122), and the third most prominent narrative covered

stories associated with Russia's priorities and values in foreign policy (*N*=109). The

least present narrative was the narrative describing Russian compatriots (*N*=39),

preceded by the narrative on Russia's official positions regarding international relations issues (*N*=63).

Figure 17. Line Chart Depicting Narrative Dominance by Month in *New York Times* and *Washington Post* (2014-2015)
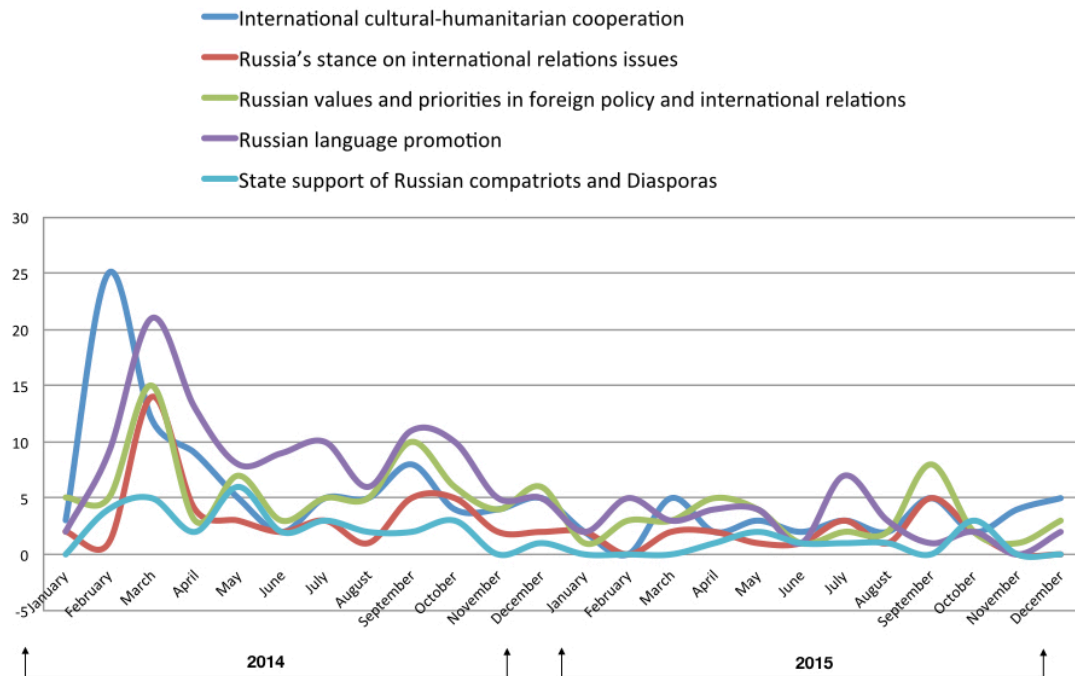
Similarly to narrative projection stage, not all narratives were evenly present in the discursive environment of the receiving country during the 24 months of the studied period. Specifically, graph 17 demonstrates that the narratives mostly spiked in the first part of 2014, flattening out by the beginning of 2015. Notably, the Russian language narrative and the international cultural-humanitarian cooperation narrative were most dominant at the time, followed by the narratives discussing Russia's foreign policy values and Russia's positions on international relations issues. The least active narrative

at the time was the narrative on Russian compatriots, in contrast with the stage of narrative projection, where this strategic narrative dominated at the same time period.

Figure 18. Area Chart Depicting Narrative Volume by Month in *New York Times* and *Washington Post* (2014-2015)
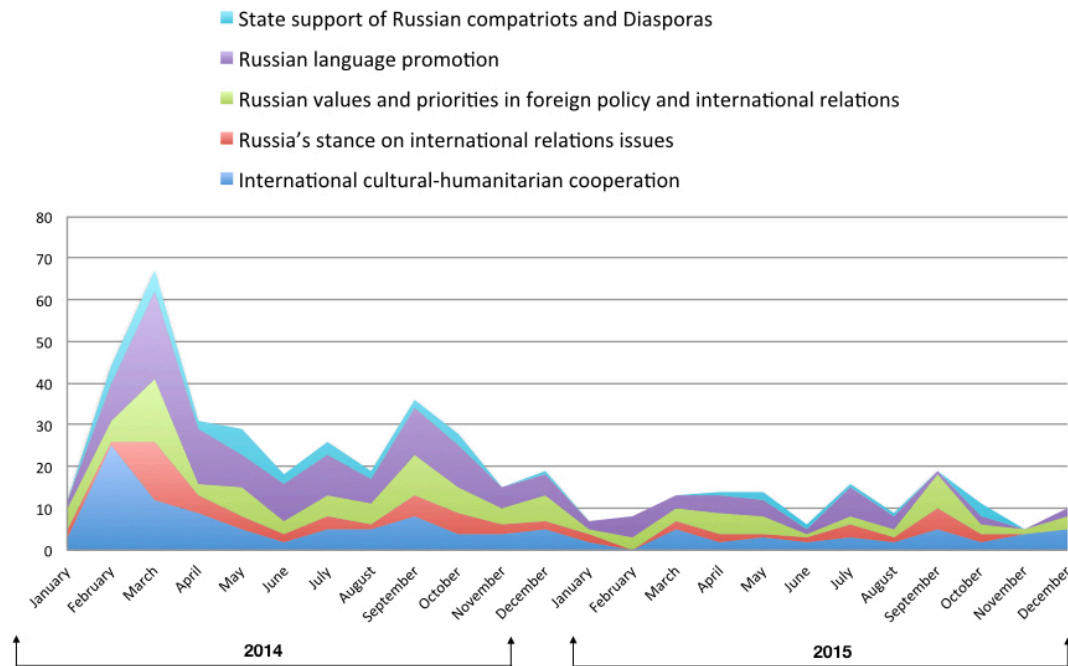
When examining narrative density during a given month, it was observed that the narrative on Russian language promotion was consistently present during the studied period (see Graph 18). This is in comparison to such narratives as Russian compatriots and Russia's stances that experienced periods of upturn and downturn throughout the 24 months. Consistent with the narrative projection stage, at any given time, the narrative discourse on international cultural-humanitarian cooperation was present in the media coverage of *New York Times* (NYT) and *Washington Post* (WP).

Sources of information at the narrative reception stage varied across narratives (see Table 19). The international cultural-humanitarian cooperation narrative was the only narrative that used all ten sources of information. Each narrative, however, had a dominant source of information. Specifically, the narrative on Russian language promotion made extensive use of non-Russian government sources, with 34% (n=49) of all articles referencing different government officials and representatives of government agencies. This source of information was also frequently used in the narrative about Russian compatriots (n=15, 38.5%) and the narrative discussing Russia's stances on international relations issues (n=19, 30.2%). Interestingly, the narrative on Russia's values and priorities in foreign policy was heavily supported by such information sources as non-Russian experts, including scientists, researchers, and analysts (n=29, 26.6%), closely followed by non-Russian public figures (n=28, 25.7%). Finally, the international cultural-humanitarian cooperation was dominated by numerous non-Russian sources without clear affiliation (n=37, 30%).

Table 19. Cross-Tabulation Between Strategic Narratives Reception and Information Sources (speakers)

	International cultural-humanitarian cooperation Frequency/Percentage	Russia's stance on international relations issues Frequency/Percentage	Russian values and priorities in foreign policy and IR Frequency/Percentage	Russian language promotion Frequency/Percentage	Russian compatriots and Diasporas Frequency/Percentage
Russian government official or government agency	10 (8.2%)	7 (11.1%)	7 (6.4%)	7 4.9%	5 (12.8%)
Russian scientists/researchers/analysts	8 (6.6%)	1 (1.6%)	4 (3.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Russian non-governmental organization, NGOs	5 (4.2%)	0 (0%)	2 (1.8%)	6 (4.2%)	1 (2.6%)
Russian public figures, such as actors	24 (19.7%)	1 (1.6%)	2 (1.8%)	9 (6.3%)	2 (5.1%)
Other Russian source (with no mention of business affiliation/occupation)	5 (4.1%)	1 (1.6%)	1 (0.9%)	7 (4.9%)	2 (5.1%)
Non-Russian government officials or government agencies	10 (8.2%)	19 (30.2%)	23 (21.1%)	49 (34.3%)	15 (38.5%)
Non-Russian scientists/researchers/analysts	7 (5.7%)	17 (27%)	29 (26.6%)	12 (8.4%)	4 (10.3%)
Non-Russian NGOs	7 (5.7%)	3 (4.8%)	2 (1.8%)	3 (2.1%)	2 (5.1%)
Non-Russian public figures, such as actors	9 (7.4%)	7 (11.1%)	28 (25.7%)	20 (14%)	3 (7.7%)
Other non-Russian sources (with no mention of business affiliation/occupation)	37 (30.3%)	7 (11.1%)	13 (11.9%)	30 (21%)	5 (12.8%)

At the same time, non-Russian government officials or representatives of a government agency dominated the across five narratives (*n*=116, 24.4%). This category of speakers was followed by non-Russian sources with no stated affiliation (*n*=92, 19.3%). Notably, non-Russian experts (*n*=69, 14.5%) and non-Russian public figures, such as actors, activists, or businessmen (*n*=67, 14.1%), were similarly significant providers of information related to the narratives (see Table 19).

Similar to the narrative projection stage, it was important to explore whether the narratives at the narrative reception stage were presented in a favorable, neutral or unfavorable tone and whether there was an association between such attributes of narrative dominance as narrative tone and level of narrative salience within a news story (Table 20). The overall tone of articles was somewhat unfavorable (*M*=1.72; *SD*=. 703), either disfavoring the strategic narratives (*n*=201; 42.2%) or presenting it neutrally (*n*=205; 43.1%), with occasional favorable discussion of Russia's strategic narratives (*n*=70; 14.7%).

Table 20. Tone of Articles Containing Narratives in the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* (frequencies)

Narrative	Unfavorable tone	Neutral tone	Favorable tone	Total N
International cultural-humanitarian cooperation	70	34	18	122
Russia's stance on international relations issues	12	45	6	63
Russian values and priorities in foreign policy and international relations	14	77	18	109
Russian language promotion	78	46	19	143
Russian compatriots and Diasporas	27	3	9	39

The Russian foreign policy narrative was presented in the most neutral tone (*M*=2.04, *SD*=.543) as well Russia's stances (*M*=1.9, *SD*=.530). All other narratives

were discussed in a more unfavorable way. Specifically, the mean score for the Russian compatriots narrative was the lowest (*M*=1.54, *SD*=.854), followed by the international cultural humanitarian cooperation narrative (*M*=1.57, *SD*=.738) and the Russian language narrative (*M*=1.59, *SD*=.715).

Further, a correlation analysis was performed to examine the connection between the tone of the narrative and the level of salience of this narrative within a news story for the identified narrative. At the level of narrative reception, as analysis showed, the level of narrative salience was significantly negatively correlated with the tone of the narrative (r = -.103, $p \leq 0.05$). In other words, the higher level of narrative salience within a news story was associated with a less favorable tone toward the narrative, embedded in the news story.

In sum, to answer the research question 3(a) about what strategic narratives reached the discursive environment of the target country and how they manifested themselves, this section explored the dominating narratives, their tone, and volume over a span of 24 months (2014-2015). All five narratives identified during the stage of narrative formation appeared to be present in the news coverage by *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. The most present and dominant narrative throughout the studied period (2014-2015) was the narrative covering the Russian language (*N*=143). This narrative was mostly discussed in unfavorable terms (*n*=78; 54.5%). Importantly, this narrative experienced the greatest growth in attention in the first half of 2014 (*n*=109) and suffered a significant decrease in 2015 (*n*=34). The least dominant narrative was the narrative on Russian compatriots (*N*=39), discussed primarily in an unfavorable way (*n*=27; 69.2%).

Research Question 3b: Strategic Narratives and Soft Power Sources at the

Level of Reception

To answer the research question 3c that asked about the sources of soft power being referenced most frequently within the strategic narratives that reached the media of the target country, the researcher also looked and coded for three general soft power sources (Nye, 2004) that are referenced in relation to the identified narrative. Notably, at the level of narrative reception, the most frequently referenced source of soft power was policy (*n*=244). Further, as evident from Table 21, values (*n*=126) was the second soft power source invoked most frequently, followed by culture (*n*=105).

Table 21. Frequency of Soft Power Sources in Articles Containing Narratives in the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* (frequencies)

Narrative	Values	Culture	Policy	Total N
International cultural-humanitarian cooperation	25	59	37	121
Russia's stance on international relations issues	3	0	60	63
Russian values and priorities in foreign policy and international relations	50	0	36	86
Russian language promotion	19	39	85	143
Russian compatriots and Diasporas	3	7	29	30
Total:	126	105	244	475

Similarly to the narrative projection stage, referenced sources of soft power differed by the narrative. For example, such soft power source as policy dominated in the narrative on Russia's official position in regard to international relations issues foreign policy (*n*=60), Russian language promotion (*n*=85), and Russian compatriots (*n*=29). Predictably, the narrative on Russian values and priorities in foreign policy most frequently invoked values as a soft power source (*n*=50), while the narrative on international cultural-humanitarian cooperation most frequently invoked culture (*n*=59).

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Further, all five narratives were identified as predominantly international level narratives (see Table 22).

Table 22. Frequency of Soft Power Sources in Articles Containing Narratives in the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* (frequencies)

Type of strategic narrative	International level			National level			Issue level		
Narratives	**Values**	**Culture**	**Policy**	**Values**	**Culture**	**Policy**	**Values**	**Culture**	**Policy**
International cultural-humanitarian cooperation	13	**28**	28	6	6	5	5	25	2
Russia's stance on international relations issues	3	0	**59**	0	0	1	0	0	0
Russian values and priorities in foreign policy and international relations	**76**	0	33	0	0	0	0	0	0
Russian language promotion	12	15	**68**	2	3	7	5	21	10
Russian compatriots and Diasporas	2	4	**26**	1	0	1	0	3	2

In sum, the U.S. media in discussions of Russia's strategic narratives most frequently referenced policy (n=244; 51.3%) as a source of soft power, one of the primary soft power sources as argued by Nye (2008) and conceptualized in this dissertation (See Table 21 and Table 22). Notably, most of Russia's strategic narratives were identified as international strategic narratives (n=368, 77.8%), yet received a negligible attention in the respective media articles (M=1.71, SD=.774).

Study Four: Comparative Analysis of Narratives Across Stages

Research Question 3c: Differences in the manifestation of strategic narratives of Russia

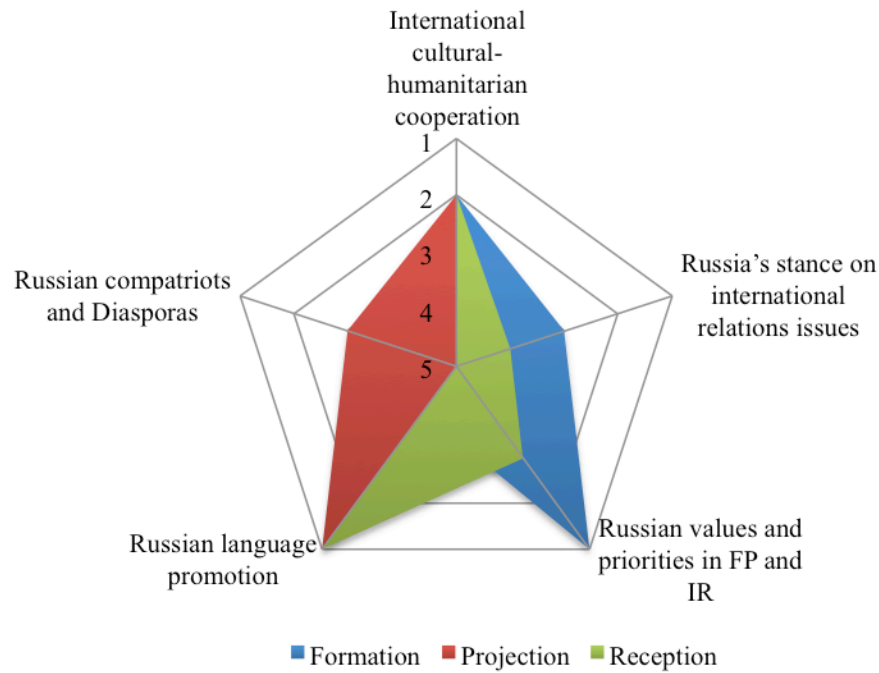*at the level of narrative projection and the level of narrative reception*

The manifestation of strategic narratives of Russia, identified during the narrative formation analysis, differed in several ways between the level of narrative projection and the level of narrative reception. First, the dominance and presence of strategic narratives themselves somewhat fluctuated between stages.

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To compare narrative dominance across three stages, narrative count was used to create a ranking of strategic narratives with 1 being most dominant and 5 being least dominant (see Table 23). As evident from Figure 19, the narrative presence fluctuated between stages narrative. First, narrative dominance changed between formation and projection stages, with the Russian foreign policy values narrative dominating at the level of formation, yet the Russian language narrative dominated at the level of narrative projection, and later at the level of reception. At the same time, when strategic narratives reached the discursive media environment of the target country more changes in dominance were observed. This is where the Russian compatriots narrative became the least dominant narrative at the level of narrative reception (see Graph 19). However, the dominating narratives remained unchanged: Russian language promotion and international cultural-humanitarian cooperation dominated both at the level of reception and projection.

Table 23. Strategic Narratives Dominance Ranking Across Stages

	Formation		Projection		Reception	
	Rank	*n*	*Rank*	*n*	*Rank*	*n*
International cultural-humanitarian cooperation	2	268	2	215	2	122
Russia's stances on international relations issues	3	145	5	76	4	63
Russian values and priorities in FP and IR	1	273	4	68	3	109
Russian language promotion	4	31	1	271	1	143
Russian compatriots and Diasporas	5	26	3	119	5	39

Figure 19. Narrative Comparison (1 – most dominant; 5 – least dominant)

Notably, the largest difference between stages was observed for the narrative focusing on Russia's stances on international relations issues, which was the least present narrative at the level of narrative projection and the narrative on Russian compatriots that was the least mentioned at the level of narrative reception (see Table 24).

Table 24. Comparing Narrative Dominance Between Narrative Stages

Narrative	Narrative projection	Narrative reception	Total
International cultural-humanitarian cooperation	215 (28.0%)	122 (25.6%)	337
Russia's stance on international relations issues	76 (9.9%)	63 (13.2%)	139
Russian values and priorities in foreign policy and international relations	86 (11.2%)	109 (22.9%)	195
Russian language promotion	271 (35.3%)	143 (30.0%)	414
Russian compatriots and Diasporas	119 (15.5%)	39 (8.2%)	29
Total:	767	476	1243

Second, there was an observable difference between referenced soft power sources in the identified narratives between the narrative projection and narrative reception stages. Specifically, it was observed that the Russian language narrative almost exclusively invoked culture in its discussions (n=199, 73.4%) at the level of narrative projection; it was referencing predominantly policy (n=85, 59.4%) at the level of narrative reception. The other four narratives demonstrated consistency and transference in referencing soft power sources similarly at the level of narrative projection and the level of narrative reception (see Table 25).

Table 25. Association Between Narratives, Narrative Stages and Sources of Soft Power

Narratives	Narrative projection			Narrative reception		
	Values	Culture	Policy	Values	Culture	Policy
International cultural-humanitarian cooperation	19	138	56	25	59	37
Russia's stance on international relations issues	18	2	55	3	0	60
Russian values and priorities in foreign policy and international relations	50	0	36	70	0	33
Russian language promotion	8	199	64	19	39	85
Russian compatriots and Diasporas	32	15	70	3	7	29

Third, the analysis showed that there is an association between narratives stages and the level of narrative salience in the examined media materials. Specifically, negligible attention to the narrative at the level of narrative projection (n=284, 37.6%) can be associated with a negligible attention to the narrative at the level of narrative reception (n=230, 48.8%). Analogously, it can be true for moderate attention and significant attention. A Chi-square test for independence indicated a significant association between narrative stage and narrative salience, $\chi2$ (2, n=1227) =19.283,

p=.000, phi = 0.13. In other words, observation of narrative salience differed between

stage of narrative projection and narrative reception.

Table 26. Association Between Narrative Stage and Narrative Salience

Narratives	Narrative projection			Narrative reception		
	Negligible	Moderate	Significant	Negligible	Moderate	Significant
International cultural-humanitarian cooperation	100	52	59	29	28	63
Russia's stance on international relations issues	7	25	43	46	14	3
Russian values and priorities in foreign policy and international relations	13	17	53	37	64	7
Russian language promotion	127	116	27	105	24	12
Russian compatriots and Diasporas	37	43	37	13	19	7

In addition, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the overall

narrative salience at the narrative projection and narrative reception stage. A significant

difference in narrative salience scores at the narrative projection stage (*M*=1.91,

SD=.812) and narrative reception stage (*M*=1.71, *SD*=.774) was observed (*t* (1225) =

4.42, *p*=.000), indicating that indeed the level of narrative salience changed between the

stages.

Fourth, an association between narrative stages and tone of the narrative (see

Table 27) was also observed. A Chi-square test for independence indicated a significant

association between narrative stage and narrative tone, $\chi2$ (2, *n*=1243) =63.163, *p*=.000,

phi = 0.23. This indicated that the observations of the narrative tone (unfavorable,

neutral, favorable) in fact differed for the stage of narrative projection and the stage of

narrative reception. An independent samples t-test was also conducted to compare the

overall tone of the narratives at the narrative projection and narrative reception stage. A

significant difference in the narrative tone scores at the narrative projection stage (*M*=2.06, *SD*=.713) and narrative reception stage (*M*=1.72, *SD*=.703) was observed (*t* (1241) = 8.01, *p*=.000). In other words, the overall narrative tone was more neutral at the level of narrative projection, and more unfavorable at the level of narrative reception (see Table 26).

Table 27. Association Between Narrative Stage and Narrative Tone

Narratives	Narrative projection			Narrative reception		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Positive
International cultural-humanitarian cooperation	46	89	80	70	34	18
Russia's stance on international relations issues	25	20	31	12	45	6
Russian values and priorities in foreign policy and international relations	32	21	33	14	77	18
Russian language promotion	27	216	28	78	46	19
Russian compatriots and Diasporas	44	29	46	27	3	9

This chapter reported the results of four studies designed and conducted to investigate strategic narratives of Russia with the purpose of answering the posed research questions and improving our understanding of soft power enactment via strategic narratives. The next chapter discusses these findings and presents potential explanations for it.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The primary interest of this dissertation lies in exploring the relationship between public diplomacy, soft power and strategic narratives to explain how and in what way soft power can be enacted via strategic narratives of public diplomacy. For this reason, the dissertation examined the strategic narratives of Russia at the level of their formation, projection, and reception. The previous chapter first presented the results of the qualitative analysis of the foundational foreign policy documents of Russia to identify the potentially embedded strategic narratives that can be used for projection. Second, the results of the content analysis of Russia's public diplomacy materials provided a glimpse into whether and what strategic narratives, identified at the level of narrative formation, were embedded in the media materials of two major Russia's public diplomacy outlets: *Russia Today* and *RIA Novosti (Sputnik)*. Third, the content of two U.S. elite newspapers, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post,* was studied to examine whether any of Russia's strategic narratives reached the discursive media environment of the target state. Finally, observations from the narrative projection and narrative reception stages were compared to identify changes in the narrative presentation. This chapter interprets and discusses these findings in relation to research questions and places such discussion in the context of reviewed literature.

In general, the results highlighted five major observations: 1) strategic narratives that are present at the level of narrative formation are also present at the level of narrative projection and narrative reception, although with varying degree of dominance; 2) some strategic narratives at the level of projection and reception

exhibited a significant growth during a similar period in the beginning of 2014, which coincides with a major international conflict surrounding Russia's annexation of Crimea; 3) strategic narratives' attributes, such as narrative salience within a story and narrative tone, differed between stages of narrative projection and narrative reception, with narratives being more neutral to positive at the projection and more neutral to negative at the reception; 4) speakers of strategic narratives also differed in several ways between stages, with Russian government officials dominating narrative projection and non-Russian government officials and public figures dominating narrative reception; 5) sources of soft power referenced in strategic narratives at the level of narrative projection were referenced in a similar manner at the level of narrative reception, with an exception of one narrative, indicating that attributes/sources of soft power attraction can fluctuate between stages. The discussion is organized around these findings.

The chapter presents the discussion of findings in six blocks. The first block summarizes findings of the study and discusses them in relation to the literature with a focus on strategic narrative development across stages and its implications for soft power enactment. The second block presents a conceptual model inspired by the literature and findings of the study. The third block discusses findings of this dissertation on strategic narratives and soft power within four public relations approaches to public diplomacy. The fourth block outlines theoretical and practical contributions of the study to the literature on public relations, public diplomacy, and soft power. The fifth block acknowledges the limitations of the study, taken into consideration when interpreting the results of this study. Finally, the sixth block

presents suggestions for future directions in research.

Stages of Strategic Narratives

Strategic narratives are described as an instrument for political actors to influence and change the discursive environment in which they operate to the benefit of those actors (Miskimmon et al., 2014). Strategic narratives do not arise naturally, but rather are constructed from the existing stories and events (Freedman, 2006). Political actors shape strategic narratives through public discussions and through the choice of language to describe and construct a policy program (Schmidt, 2002). The results of this dissertation support this assertion, as the strategic narratives shaped and embedded in the three examined Russian foreign policy documents at the level of narrative formation were also found at the level of narrative projection and narrative reception.

Overall, the study of Russia's strategic narratives across stages allowed us to understand the process behind strategic narratives better. First, the results revealed the five strategic narratives of Russia that can be deployed when necessary. These narratives freely exist in the social and political environment, without being strategically deployed. The narratives acquire dominance and their strategic nature when political elites attach meaning and significance to them by deciding to project these narratives. In the case of Russia, narratives such as Russian culture and Russian language have existed in the environment for some time, before being aggressively projected by Russia in 2014, specifically during the events in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. Indeed, during the months of March, April, May, and June of 2014 Russia had been actively invoking the need to protect the Russian language against the

discrimination and to defend the rights of the Russian-speaking populations of Ukraine to practice the Russian culture and to speak the Russian language.

The deployment of narratives is inherently strategic; when political elites attach significance to narratives these narratives become an instrument of influence. The choice of strategic narrative for deployment may be conditioned by the socio-economic environment of the moment, events, and even by the nature of the target state's discursive media environment. This is illustrated by the spike in the overall narrative projection in early 2014, when the conflict between Russia and Ukraine broke out.

The narrative reception stage, as described in the literature, is not an inescapable destination for a strategic narrative. First, strategic narratives must be able to reach the discursive environment of the target state, usually comprised of prominent media outlets. This stage is at which strategic narratives are being diffused, not necessarily received or accepted. At the diffusion stage, narratives may compete against the narratives from other sources. In general, travelling through stages narratives may be susceptible to influence and structural change, and therefore strategic narratives may undergo significant transformation by the time they are consumed by target publics. As such, depending on narrative diffusion, strategic narratives then can be accepted or rejected by general public. As such, the diffusion stage, or the discursive media environment at the level of reception, facilitates the acceptance or rejection of the narrative. This is the stage where narrative contestation occurs and the meaning of the narrative can be re-interpreted. Miskimmon et al. (2014) referred to narrative contestation but saw it happening at the level of reception. Further discussion highlights these conceptualizations through findings of this study.

Narrative Formation

Overall, the results of the study revealed five major strategic narratives of Russia embedded in the foreign policy documents of Russia: 1) international cultural-humanitarian cooperation, 2) Russia's stance on international relations issues, 3) Russian values and priorities in foreign policy and international relations, 4) Russian language promotion, 5) Russian compatriots and Diasporas. These strategic narratives at the level of narrative formation emerged as general topical categories that essentially represent a framework for audiences to understand and interpret events and actions of Russia's political actors, providing meaning to an unfamiliar phenomenon (Miskimmon et al., 2014). In other words, Russian government defined and shaped these narratives to explain and/or justify its actions at the international and domestic arena, which it did as the findings indicate.

Understanding the strategic intent of a political actor should be central to the study of the narrative formation, conceptualized by previous literature (Miskimmon et al., 2014) and illustrated by this study. These intents can be long-term or short-term oriented. Short-term goals of strategic narratives can be associated with narratives focused on policy and related to policy outcomes. The long-term intent for strategic narratives is associated with positive image cultivation and fostering positive opinions about the advocate country (Nye, 2008). Indeed, the results of the narrative formation analysis demonstrated that Russia's strategic narratives largely considered and often implied strategic intent, both short-term and long-term.

For example, the narrative on international cultural-humanitarian cooperation, in essence, represented a policy that focused on improving the image and reputation of

Russia in the world by stressing the uniqueness of the Russian culture. The foreign policy documents see international cultural-humanitarian cooperation policy as an opportunity to promote the unique Russian culture and defend its history and worldview, if necessary. The strategic intent of this narrative was presented as a fight against history falsification and anti-Russian propaganda.

Similarly, the narrative on Russian values in international relations represents a long-term strategic intent of Russia to reshape the world order by projecting the narrative that international peace and security are not possible without a reconsideration of the existing world order as polycentric and multipolar. The narrative on Russia's position in international relations embraces the policy of non-interference and a non-alternative to political solutions to conflicts as its cornerstone position in international relations.

The Russian language narrative also shares a strategic intent that can both be achieved in short and long term, because the Russian language in the narrative is presented as a tool of social and political influence but also as an instrument of socio-political integration within the Post-Soviet space. Further, the narrative on Russian compatriots has a long-term intent of creating the Russian World to preserve the ethnocultural identity of the Russian diaspora and compatriots.

Narrative characteristics as frames. An important consideration in the study of narrative formation was the understanding of how to recognize a strategic narrative constructed by a political actor at later stages, specifically at the level of narrative projection and narrative reception. Narratives, unlike frames, possess temporal and causal features that not just describe or label an event but put it in context, evoking a

particular interpretation from the audiences. However, narratives may have several components or characteristics that must be framed in a specific way for a strategic narrative to achieve its purpose (Miskimmon et al., 2014). The strategic narratives, embedded in the foundational foreign policy documents of Russia, were multifaceted. The characteristics of each narrative, represented through narrative structure, could have been embedded independently or together within a strategic narrative projected by Russian public diplomacy efforts. These features could be added or removed from a narrative as necessary allowing for re-interpretation of events.

For example, the narrative that described Russian foreign policy values and priorities essentially consisted of two interdependent subnarratives or frames: Russia values international security, which can only be achieved through the formulation of a new world order. Similarly, many of the characteristics of the international cultural-humanitarian cooperation could be potentially embedded in the narratives projected by the Russian public diplomacy efforts, broken down into several sub-narratives related to Russian culture, Russian history, Russian education, and tourism as well as intercultural dialogue.

The subnarratives of the Russian language narrative focused on the importance of the Russian language as a tool for social and political influence and Eurasian integration, the importance of the Russian-language media abroad, and the protection of the Russian language against discrimination. The characteristics of the Russian compatriots narrative could be embedded in the narratives in the form of the discussion about the rights and freedoms of Russian Diasporas and Russian compatriots abroad, including rights of the Russian-born children adopted abroad, that comprise a Russian

World– a space for historically spread out people of Russia. The characteristics of the narrative of Russia's stances on international relations issues were the principles of non-interference, a non-alternative to political solutions to conflicts, Russia's commitment to Rule of Law in international relations, and supporting the role of United Nations in international relations.

These characteristics of narratives can be treated as the manifest features of the strategic narratives structure and be independently highlighted at the level of narrative projection and reception. In other words, once the narratives are identified or shaped at the level of narrative formation, their features could be used to highlight certain aspects of strategic narrative depending on the context of media environment and the strategic intent. For example, the narrative on Russian compatriots contained narrative characteristics or narrative frames that referenced Russian-born children adopted abroad (specifically, USA). By highlighting this aspect of the narrative at the level of projection, this issue was politicized to attract attention and shape perceptions of the United States. As such, these manifest features of strategic narratives could be used as frames at later stages of projection and/or reception. This notion resonates with Miskimmon et al.'s (2014) argument that "the various components of a narrative must be framed a certain way" (p. 7). It can be argued that the framing process may play a role in strategic narratives. However, framing must be considered in relation to strategic narratives, especially at the stage of projection and reception. Thinking about framing in the context of a narrative may not just answer the question of how media frames international relations issues but more importantly why it frames them the way it does.

Narrative Projection and Narrative Reception

The projection and reception of a narrative occur through both mediated and non-mediated communication. The narrative projection stage is most closely associated with public diplomacy and public relations, as strategic narratives of an advocate country are most likely to be projected not only via such public diplomacy tools as international broadcasting, speeches, exchanges, etc., but also through media relations and public affairs functions of public relations. As an instrument of foreign policy, public diplomacy often echoes strategic narratives consistent with the government's position. In the case of this dissertation, the analyzed Russian public diplomacy media outlets projected all five strategic narratives found in Russia's foreign policy documents. The most dominating narrative at the stage of narrative projection was the Russian language promotion narrative, in contrast to the narrative formation stage, where the Russian foreign policy values narrative dominated. It was followed by the international cultural-humanitarian cooperation narrative, Russian compatriots narrative, and Russian values in international relations. The least available narrative was the narrative outlining Russia's position on international relations issues. The difference in narrative dominance between the formation and projection stages can be explained by a number of reasons. First, the Russian government could have prioritized the narrative based on its strategic needs of the moment and, in general, socio-political context. Second, the channels through which these narratives were projected may explain the prioritization of the narratives. In other words, government-funded media, in this case, two Russia's public diplomacy outlets, traditionally cover issues that may help the Russian government to project the controlled narrative about the developing events in

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the world, support Russia's position on the issue and present Russia in a favorable light in general.

The dominant narratives changed once the strategic narratives reached the discursive media environment of the target country. This is where the Russian compatriots narrative became the least dominant narrative at the level of narrative reception. However, the two dominating narratives remained unchanged, both at the level of projection and reception: Russian language promotion and international cultural-humanitarian cooperation dominated both at the level of reception and projection.

Based on the dominance of strategic narratives in their respective stages, it was observed that narratives might overlap between the stages of projection and reception. In other words, the attention to strategic narratives at the projection stage corresponded to the similar level of attention to the same strategic narratives at the reception stage. By way of explanation, the narrative that has been most actively projected is most likely to reach the discursive media environment of the target country (see Figure 20). Further, the difference in narrative prominence between stages of narrative formation and narrative projection can be explained by the strategic needs of the moment, when social, political and media context preconditions the amount of emphasis any strategic narrative and its characteristics receive at the level of projection and reception (see Figure 20).

Figure 20. Aspects of Strategic Narrative Development
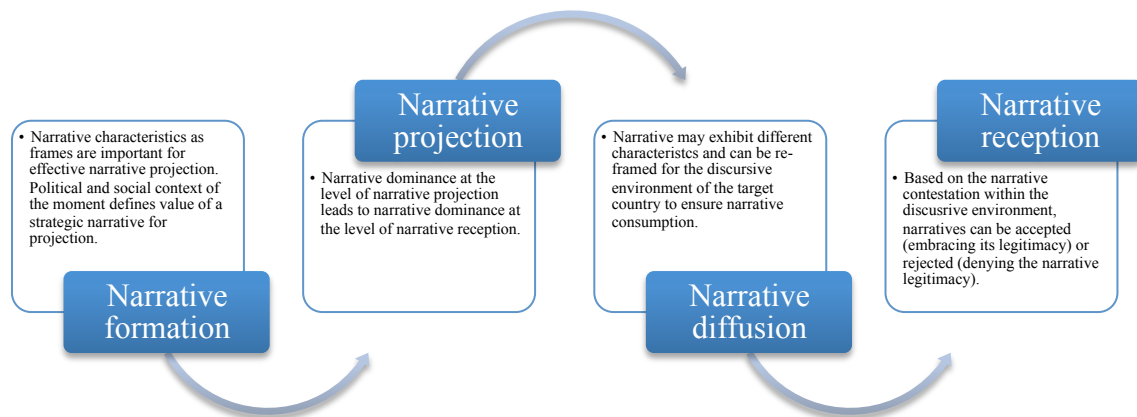
Although initially in this dissertation the media environment of the target country was conceptualized as a discursive arena for strategic narratives discussion and contestation before publics consume them at the level of narrative reception (Liao, 2017; Miskimmon et al., 2014), the findings of this study call for its reconsideration. The study offers to treat the discursive media environment as an intermediate stage of strategic narrative development that does not imply narrative reception, but rather a narrative diffusion. As such, the diffusion stage of strategic narrative development can be central to understanding how narratives are being received by the target publics: are narratives being accepted or rejected? Importantly, the discursive media environment of the target country can reconfigure the way foreign policy information is being formed, collected and circulated, providing context for how those "audiences consume news and political information, how they compare sources and attribute credibility, and whether they discuss narratives with friends, family, or colleagues" (Miskimmon et al., p. 12).

George (2015) argued that media, in general, thwart the projection of strategic narratives due to increased availability of other narratives from many sources at the same time. These narratives meet within the discursive media environment, where, in certain cases, narrative contestation may happen. This is why understanding and examination of the diffusion stage is important. During the diffusion stage, through the use of narrative frames strategic narratives can be significantly simplified for consumption and/or altered by the time they make it to the media, especially if strategic narratives focus on legitimizing of foreign policy. The simplification of narratives at the level of narrative diffusion within the media discourse may lead to potential narrative re-structuring and re-interpretation, potentially conditioning narrative acceptance or rejection.

Strategic Narratives and the Role of Events

The importance of social, political and media context of the moment was highlighted by the findings of this study that demonstrated an uneven volume of strategic narratives present at the level of projection and reception throughout the studied period. The results showed that the stories on Russian language and Russian compatriots significantly spiked during the months of March, April, May, and June of 2014, projected via *RIA Novosti* and *Russia Today*. Similarly to the narrative projection stage, the Russian language narrative during the same period was the most present in the discursive environment of the target country, the United States in this case.

This period was marked by a major international event – Russia's annexation of Crimea and conflict in the Russian-speaking Eastern Ukraine. It is reasonable to assume that this event and an overall political situation surrounding it created a need for

projection of strategic narratives that would most resonate with the discussion of events and provide context for interpretation of these events to the benefit of the advocate state. Indeed, the projected by Russia narratives of the Russian language and Russian compatriots strived to contextualize the events in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine by politicizing the rights of Russian speakers to speak the Russian language and identify with Russia as their historic homeland. This further highlights the importance of the strategic narrative that can be deployed based on the foreign policy needs and on the events and the socio-political environment of the moment.

The narrative on the Russian language has also been dominating the discursive media environment of the United States when both the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* dedicated significant space to the narrative. Importantly, this strategic narrative dominated Russia's narrative projection during the same period as it dominated the U.S. discursive environment, indicating a time-bound need for individual strategic narratives. This observation adds to Miskimmon et al.'s (2014) and Freedman's (2006) argument that strategic narratives can serve as an instrument for political actors to influence and change the discursive environment to their benefit by highlighting the way strategic narratives are constructed around the existing stories and events. It also adds to our understanding of strategic narratives and the purpose they may serve for short-term goals. By deploying a strategic narrative that is conditioned on socio-political context, the advocate country (Russia) amplified the strategic narrative's potential to affect the discursive environment of the target state (the U.S.A). The study also demonstrated the need to investigate the relationship between pre-existing narratives at the level of formation and the projected narratives tied to specific events.

Strategic Narratives and Soft Power Sources

The relationship between strategic narratives and soft power can be explained by an assumption that soft power is embedded in our lives through our culture and values, and in order to enact soft power, it is important to communicate about the diverse soft power sources. Several scholars previously addressed the soft power as a narrative-based phenomenon (Hayden, 2012; Mattern, 2005; Roselle et al., 2014), arguing that in order for attraction to take place its sources cannot be kept private but must be continuously deployed. Hayden (2012) specifically suggested that attraction is better thought of as "a form of symbolic, influence-oriented communication" (p. 43) and as a "reaction to compelling attributes" (p. 45) of a nation, highlighting the importance of sources in considerations of soft power conceptualizations. In other words, soft power sources must be strategically communicated, which can be channeled through public diplomacy and public relations (Seib, 2006).

These sources of soft power, according to Hayden (2012), lie with the rhetorical capacity of an actor and belong in the communication domain. In other words, how an advocate state, Russia in this case, communicates about these soft power sources via strategic narratives may determine whether soft power can be enacted. If strategic narratives have the ability to enact soft power, these strategic narratives must reference the soft power sources of the advocate state.

The findings of this study demonstrated that the referenced sources of soft power varied significantly by narrative. In general, however, the use of referenced soft power sources between narrative stages was consistent with four narratives demonstrating a transference in referencing soft power sources similarly at the level of

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narrative projection and the level of narrative reception. The most significant change was observed for the dominating narrative on the Russian language. Specifically, the results showed that the Russian language narrative almost exclusively invoked culture in its discussions at the level of narrative projection while predominantly referencing policy as a soft power source at the level of narrative reception.

Although Nye (2008) did warn that soft power may or may not produce the desired policy outcome, he argued that soft power originating from different sources can have a different impact on different publics. The findings of this study question this assertion as the sources of soft power that are embedded in projected narratives may be received and interpreted by the target publics differently.

The strategic narrative about the Russian language, projected through the Russian public diplomacy efforts (*Russia Today* and *RIA Novosti*), attempted to invoke the Russian culture as a source of soft power attraction; however, this strategic narrative reached the discursive environment of the Untied States re-interpreted, treating the Russian language not as part of the Russian cultural heritage but rather as part of Russia's foreign policy (as evident from publications in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* during the analyzed period). This difference in the referenced soft power sources for the dominating narrative between stages can be explained by the influence of the social, political and media environment of the moment. It may also indicate the importance of the diffusion stage and the narrative contestation that occurs within it. Once again, future studies on strategic narratives should examine this connection between events, political climate, and strategic narratives.

Strategic Narratives and Guarantors of Soft Power

Another potential explanation for re-interpretation of the soft power sources between the narrative projection and narrative reception is the use of soft power referees (Nye, 2008), conceptualized as information sources in this study, to deliver and validate the strategic narratives embedded within the news stories.

Importantly, speakers for the narratives or sources of information in public diplomacy materials varied across narratives; however, Russian government officials or representatives of a government agency dominated the majority of the projected narratives. The second most frequent source of information at the level of narrative projection was the non-Russian government officials. At the same time, at the level of narrative reception, non-Russian government officials or representatives of a government agency dominated the majority of articles, followed by non-Russian sources with no stated affiliation and non-Russian experts.

As Nye (2008) suggested, often, the referees of the soft power sources are independent and state media, NGOs and INGOs, governments and market players (depending on the source), who see value in those sources and the opportunity to capitalize on it. In general, the results of this study demonstrated that Russian strategic narratives utilized diverse referees or sources of information, although government sources dominated. Arguably, by projecting the sources of soft power, these referees have the ability to wield soft power. In a way, by accepting the legitimacy of the soft power source and the narrative, a referee accepts its influence over him/her. However, given that at least for one strategic narrative (the Russian language narrative) the guarantors of soft power rejected the legitimacy of the soft power source by re-

interpreting it (from culture to policy), it can be argued that this narrative was rejected within the discursive environment of the target state. As such, a strategic narrative can be contested by other competing narratives from different sources and by the target publics themselves, and the outcome of this contestation may determine the acceptance or rejection of the narrative.

Strategic Narratives' Tone and Salience

While events may influence the growth of certain narratives and their overlap between stages, the manner in which those strategic narratives are presented can differ between stages as well. This notion is reflected in Nye's statement that argued, "what the target thinks is particularly important, and the targets matter as much as the agents" (2011, p. 84). Roselle et al. (2014) reported there are no analytical solutions to date to capture these processes. One such solution can be the tracing of strategic narratives from formation to projection to diffusion and reception and by looking at the manifestation of strategic narratives within content of media that project or receives the narrative.

Specifically, the findings of this study showed that there is an association between narrative stages and the level of narrative salience in the examined media materials. Specifically, significant attention to the narrative at the level of narrative projection can be associated with a significant attention to the narrative at the level of narrative reception, and vice versa. Also, an association between narrative stages and tone of the narrative was also observed. Interestingly, the overall narrative tone of the narrative was more neutral at the level of narrative projection, and more unfavorable at the level of narrative reception. This is an important observation that may indicate that

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while a strategic narrative is able to reach the discursive environment of the target state, its diffusion does not necessarily guarantee a positive reception that leads to the narrative acceptance and/or retention.

However, it was observed at the level of narrative projection that a more favorable tone toward the embedded narrative is significantly positively correlated with the higher level of salience of that narrative within a news story that represents strategic public diplomacy efforts. At the level of narrative reception, however, a less favorable tone of the embedded narrative correlated with the higher level of narrative salience within a news story. In other words, unfavorable narratives tended to be more salient within the discursive environment of the target state.

While this is unsurprising, as projected strategic narratives are designed to benefit the advocate state, this may also indicate the impact of the event (e.g. Crimea's annexation) on facilitating the narrative dominance or it may demonstrate and affect the rejection of the narrative within the discursive media environment of the target country. All the while the presence of those strategic narratives was nevertheless significant.

Such finding of this exploratory study of strategic narratives of public diplomacy indicates the need to explore this phenomenon further. This once again demonstrates the need for reconsideration of the narrative reception stage as consisting of substages: 1) the projected strategic narratives reaching the discursive environment of the target state (being received and or discussed by the media), and 2) strategic narratives being accepted as legitimate by the publics. The existing literature and conceptualizations of strategic narratives do not take this into account.

Strategic Narratives and The Enactment of Soft Power

Roselle et al. (2014) argued that strategic narratives can be regarded as "soft power in the 21st century" concerned with "whose story wins" (p. 71), describing strategic narratives as "a tool for political actors to extend their influence, manage expectations, and change the discursive environment in which they operate" (p. 70). Using the case of Russia, this dissertation examined the strategic narrative's development from their formation to projection to their reception to investigate the role of strategic narratives in the enactment of soft power. This dissertation contends that soft power of an actor (advocate country) can be enacted via strategic narratives developed by state actors and deployed via public diplomacy means onto the target state.

From this perspective, narratives are seen as consensually defined social realities that inform people's understanding of their life experiences (Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1994). Strategic narratives, those that are accepted and agreed-upon by members of the public, help individuals interpret common experiences. In other words, people who share the understanding of a narrative also share the understanding of reality and become a "rhetorical community, knit together by a common sense of purpose, agency, motivation, and action" (Garner, et al., 1998, p. 63). Therefore, strategic narratives, deployed to structure the consensually defined social reality, may be enacting soft power of an advocate country by leveraging the power of appeal to its culture, values, and policies via strategic narratives.

The findings of this study indicate that the enactment of soft power by projecting strategic narratives of public diplomacy is not a simple linear process that

allows for easy consumption of strategic narratives by foreign publics. The findings of this dissertation, however, allow theorizing how the process of soft power enactment takes place to improve our overall understanding of soft power and the role of public diplomacy in it.

Strategic narratives and narratives, in general, are compelling power resources and are designed with the purpose of anticipating and structuring publics' responses to developing events. It is argued here that strategic narratives structure expectations and behavior of actors by deliberately constructing and reinforcing the ideas that are already current, as narratives offer frames for the issues and suggest responses (see Freedman, 2006). By structuring behavior and expectations about international actors and states narratives exert a certain influence (Miskimmon et al., 2014). As such, it is a political actor's ability or in a government's ability, to construct narratives that enhance the appeal of a country for foreign audiences. Similarly, this is what Nye (2004) called soft power or the power of attraction. This dissertation argues that the construction of the narrative that boosts the appeal of an advocate state happens at the level of *narrative formation*.

To be effective, strategic narratives, shaped at the level of formation, need to resonate with values, interests, and beliefs of the intended audiences and be based on existing ideas and values (Dimitriu, 2012). The need to manage perceptions and to appear attractive is at the core of Nye's idea of soft power. According to Nye (2004), attraction "has a diffuse effect, creating general influence rather than producing an easily observable specific action" (p. 16). As such, the perception of a country's attractiveness becomes the context in which individual communication transactions take

place, an environment in which messages of an advocate country are being received and interpreted. Therefore, state and non-state actors have a vested interest in cultivating attractiveness, a positive perception of themselves, including through public diplomacy and strategic narratives. The soft power attraction can be both yielded and wielded at the level of *narrative projection*.

Further, the perception of attractiveness is a subjective experience that differs across nations and times. Soft power of an advocate country in one region at any given time will be different at another region. For example, U.S. soft power in Europe is different in strength than U.S. soft power in the Arab world (Sun, 2008), just as Russia's soft power in the post-Soviet space (Ukraine before 2014, or Armenia currently, for example) is different in strength from its soft power in the United States (Bogomolov & Lytvynenko, 2012). The events and previous experiences with a nation may influence the soft power attraction. Specifically, soft power attraction can be based on such soft power sources as policy. This makes the case of Russia's strategic narratives an example worth studying. According to Yan (2007) soft power oftentimes is political and less so cultural. This highlights the policy as a soft power source, the only soft power source within direct government control. In other words, policies and political decisions constitute the main source of soft power attraction that is under the government control entirely, and, therefore, represent a major element of strategic narratives projected by the advocate state.

Importantly, this perception of attraction that soft power produces is codetermined between an agent and the target audience (Solomon, 2014; Watanabe & McConnell). In other words, advocate states choose to incorporate the attractive

characteristics of themselves into the strategic narratives based on the preferences of the

target publics while the target public legitimizes this attraction by acknowledging it.

This description explains the interdependence between the process of strategic narrative

projection and strategic narrative reception when an agent must choose the best

narrative to exert influence with at the level of narrative projection and the target

audience must accept the narrative with possible re-interpretation at the level of

narrative reception. The findings of this dissertation illustrated this point, as the ranking

of dominating strategic narratives at the level of formation was different from the level

of narrative projection. Specifically, the Russian political elites attached a more

significant attention to the Russia's foreign policy values at the level of narrative

formation; yet, at the level of projection narrative dominance shifted toward the Russian

language narrative. The choice of the narrative and narrative frame for projection was

contingent upon the need of the moment, events and socio-political environment in

general.

The main arguments in support of the notion that strategic narratives have the

ability to enact soft power or serve as a soft power conduit are based on the assumption

that those strategic narratives can survive the transition from the narrative formation to

narrative projection to narrative reception (see Figure 21). The findings of this

dissertation demonstrated that, in fact, a strategic narrative, formed by political elites of

the advocate country, can reach the discursive environment of the target country. The

ability of the narrative to reach the media of the target state does not ensure the

narrative acceptance, however. It is argued here that before the publics of the target

state can consume strategic narratives, narratives go through an intermediate stage,

which is proposed in this dissertation as the diffusion stage, that reflects the ability of a strategic narrative to reach the discursive media environment of the target state. At the diffusion stage narratives can be re-formulated and re-framed for domestic consumption (see Figure 21).

The proposed diffusion stage of strategic narratives captures the previously unexplained concern of how strategic narratives are actually being received at the stage of narrative reception. The diffusion stage, justified by findings of this study, explains that, first, narratives must be digested by the discursive environment of the target state.

Figure 21. Strategic Narratives of Public Diplomacy and Soft Power Enactment
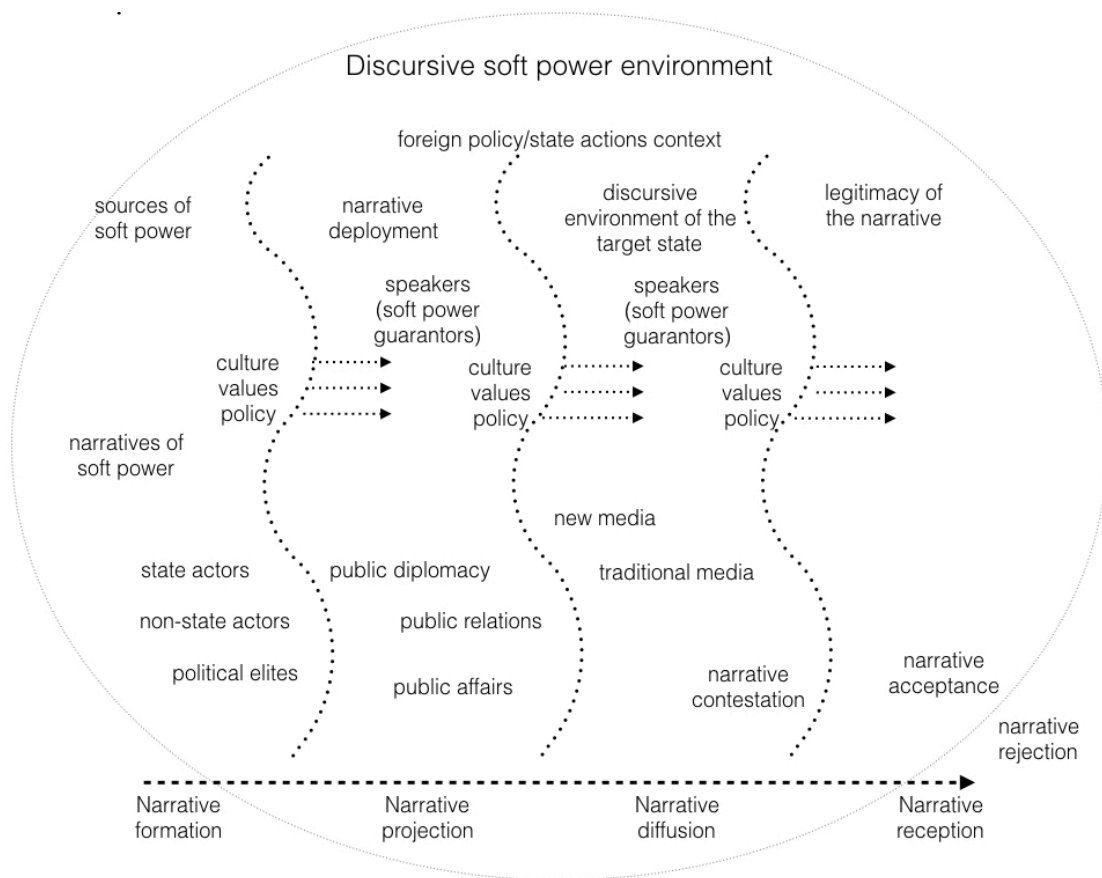
This study looked at traditional media, but new media in the form of discussions on social media as well as within the comment section of news articles provide the

opportunity for narrative diffusion and contestation. The manner in which the narrative is presented within a discursive environment of the target state and how much it is contested may lead either to narrative reception or narrative rejection (see Figure 21). In addition, the discursive environment itself may force the adjustment of strategic narrative projection, prioritizing one narrative frame in the narrative structure over the other. The reception of the narrative, measured through opinion surveys, for example, would demonstrate the legitimacy of the narrative. The rejection of the narrative, however, may force the advocate state to reconsider the narrative and narrative structure altogether.

Soft power and strategic narratives share a symbiotic relationship – the context of soft power forces strategic narratives to adjust in order to create consensus. The advocate states use strategic narratives to construct a shared meaning of their past, present, and future actions hoping to shape behaviors of their many constituencies. Strategic narratives need to tap into one of the soft power sources to be effective and serve as a catalyst for conversion. To be successful/effective, strategic narratives at the level of narrative formation need to have and/or originate from soft power sources (see Figure 21). In sum, compelling strategic narratives allow the enactment of soft power, creating an enabling discursive environment of soft power for individual communication transactions. By extension, when strategic narratives are rejected, they fail to enact soft power creating a discursive soft power environment that is disabling. Case in point, the Russian language narrative was projected within the context of an international event that served as a context (Crimea's annexation), first hindering the diffusion of strategic narrative and then its interpretation as it was intended at

projection. Here, the context or the environment in which strategic narratives operate is important, including foreign policy needs of the advocate state and its actions in international relations.

Strategic Narratives and Public Diplomacy Approaches

This dissertation contends that because public diplomacy is a governmental public relations function (Signitzer & Wamser, 2006), both public relations and public diplomacy play role in the projection, diffusion, and reception of strategic narratives. Specifically, public relations approaches to public diplomacy may prove useful at different levels of strategic narratives.

When considering the role of strategic narratives in public diplomacy, the mediated approach to public diplomacy appears to be the most fitting and capable of explaining strategic narratives. As Golan and Yang (2014) postulated, the mediated public diplomacy emphasizes strategic management of communication content and coverage of international affairs with a goal of cultivating a favorable image of the nation. Being integral to strategic communication management, strategic narratives can facilitate such image cultivation.

Similar to the description of the mediated approach functionality, strategic narratives attempt to cultivate shared meaning, in which Boulding's idea of the image (perception) can be central. Boulding (1956) suggested that behavior of an individual depends on the images of reality a person holds and the meaning he or she draws from these images. By deploying strategic narratives, governments of the advocate states strive to control the discussions of the country's policies in foreign media by highlighting certain narrative frames while downplaying others. Further, the results of

this study on the embedded soft power sources in strategic narratives of Russia resonated with Hayden's (2012) assertion that the cultivation of nation's image through the media with frequent references to cultural norms and values and dispositional characteristics of the nation could have an expected diplomatic benefit.

Although Zaharna (2010) criticized the mediated approach to public diplomacy, arguing that it is no longer about an information battle, the battle nevertheless continues as findings of this dissertation indicate. Perhaps, it is too early to discard the mediated approach as it seems to be used extensively by Russia (it also demonstrated some effectiveness as this study showed): as the volume of stories containing strategic narratives projected onto the target publics spiked so did the volume of stories containing strategic narratives that reached the discursive environment of the target country. Further, Zaharna (2010) described the mediated approach to public diplomacy as the mass communication approach, where communication problems are seen as information problems. When placed in this context, strategic narratives can be seen as a solution to a communication problem that can be solved through increased information, particularly if one thinks about public diplomacy as a "strategic contest over international agenda building" (Sheafer & Gabay, 2009, p. 448). This is, of course, only true if one considers international broadcasting as the main channel for deployment of strategic narratives. However, strategic narratives can be delivered in a non-mass communication way as well.

The relational approach to public diplomacy can be considered as an opportunity to deliver strategic narratives in a non-mass communication way. In general, strategic narratives do not allow for two-way communication, an important aspect of relational

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view on both public relations and public diplomacy (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Kruckeberg & Vujnovic, 2005). Although social media allows engaging with the narrative in a relatively reciprocal manner, it is often about narrative contestation (Miskimmon et al., 2014; Zaharna, 2016).

Unlike in mediated public diplomacy, strategic narratives in the relational approach are delivered through such means as international exchanges, cultural diplomacy, interpersonal communication and virtual networks. Narratives in this way would be delivered more interpersonally than through international broadcasting, although strategic narratives themselves can be focused on the stories of cultural exchanges, culture, the value of relationship building, cooperation and mutual interest. The strategic narratives of Russia indeed focused on such stories, specifically within the narrative of international cultural-humanitarian cooperation and the Russian language.

From the relational perspective, for both public relations and public diplomacy, relationships (i.e. cooperation at the level of international relations) are the ultimate goal and an essential element in ensuring good reputation and positive image of a country. The intent behind strategic narratives can similarly be the improved relationships, when the parties agree on the meaning of the narrative and/or are ready to accept it.

The relational approach to public diplomacy stresses engagement over information dissemination (Snow, 2014). As such, it is important from the perspective of relational public diplomacy for target publics to engage with the narrative. Because the solution to communication problem under relational view is the increased interactions, it is important to consider delivering strategic narratives in different ways, through interpersonal communication and increased contacts, including through social

media. Although the communication problem under the relational view is the relationship problem (Zaharna, 2010), an improved understanding and creating shared meaning is equally essential to improving relationships, which can also be achieved through strategic narratives.

However, the interpersonal communication may not be the most efficient medium for strategic narrative delivery as it is time and resource consuming (Leonard, 2002; Zaharna, 2010). Importantly, publics in public diplomacy still receive information via traditional media; it is the interpretation of the information that happens through interpersonal communication that matters. The meaning of strategic narrative, its reception and retention happen in the context of a relationship.

This consideration is important when examining narrative reception. The overall inter-country relationship may condition in what way strategic narratives are received by the audiences of the target country. In other words, the reception of strategic narratives depends on the relationship context but also on the discursive environment of the receiving country, how much the media of that country pays attention to Russia's strategic narratives and how fast the narrative is circulated within that environment. As Zaharna explained (2010), "information draws its value not by how effectively it is designed or delivered (a one-time occurrence), but by how fast and excessively it is circulated within the social context" (p. 147). In a way, the mediated approach to public diplomacy is more applicable to the level of strategic narrative projection, whereas relational approach is more applicable to focus on at the level of narrative reception.

The mediated and relational approaches to public diplomacy are often described as incompatible, instead, their application could be considered in relation to different

stages of narrative development. The integrated approach to public diplomacy marries these two perspectives and introduces nation branding into the equation.

It is argued here, that integrated approach overlaps the stages of narrative projection and narrative reception as it combines both information and cultural functions of public diplomacy. It also acknowledges both the long-term and short-term potential of communication and of strategic narratives. As Deibel and Roberts (1976) argued that "changing foreign attitudes is a process to be measured in years, and the only feasible goal is to create a climate of mutual understanding in which the particulars of future national policies can be communicated abroad in a receptive atmosphere" (p. 15).

Further, the integrated approach to public diplomacy introduced nation branding as one of the public diplomacy strategies because nation-branding initiatives can be more tactical in nature, linking issues and cultural attributes (Kaneva, 2011). It can be argued that nation branding also utilizes strategic narratives to present a country's brand to the world. In fact, presenting Russia's cultural heritage to the world through a narrative is a way to brand a country. Also, in its narratives, Russia has also focused on tourism promotion and presenting Russia as a desirable tourist destination. As such, it can be argued, Russia has attempted to brand itself. However, brands and branding can also occur through meaning creation and co-creation, with meaning and values being culture-specific (Szondi, 2008). Therefore, in relation to the strategic narrative development, integrated approach can be seen as in between the narrative projection and narrative reception, at the level of narrative diffusion where meaning can be created through narrative contestation.

The collaborative and network approach to public diplomacy can be considered an extension of the relational approach, with relationships still holding a central role. However, the relationships are conceptualized as networks and collaborative initiatives. Zaharna (2010) argued that in public diplomacy more complex relational activities transform into the network and collaborative forms of public diplomacy.

In general, the role of strategic narratives in this approach can be conceptualized as rather utilitarian. In essence, networks and collaboration initiatives can serve as conduits for quick and effective information sharing and strategic narrative diffusion within network structure. Yang and Taylor (2014) argued that the worth of individual political actors is contingent upon the position that the actor occupies within a network. Alternatively, networks themselves and the role the advocate state plays within the network can become strategic narratives.

Figure 22. Strategic Narratives in Public Diplomacy Approaches
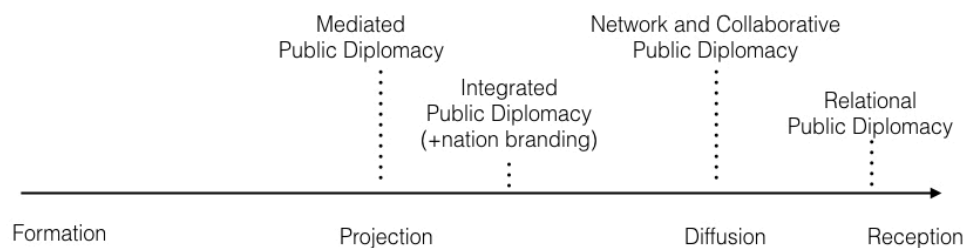
Strategic narratives and four public diplomacy approaches can inform each other's application and conceptualizations. Specifically, it can be argued that certain public diplomacy approaches can be utilized during a specific stage of strategic

narrative deployment. For example, the mediated approach to public diplomacy can inform research and practice of strategic narrative projection. Similarly, integrated approach can shape strategy for narrative projection, yet due to its embedded relational function, the approach is equally applicable at the level of reception. The network and collaborative approach to public diplomacy can best help diffusion of the narrative, once the strategic narrative reached the discursive media environment of the target country. Finally, the assumptions of the relational approach can best inform strategies of strategic narrative reception due to its functional capabilities to deliver messages through interpersonal communication.

Theoretical Contributions and Practical Applications

This dissertation makes several contributions to the theory and practice of public diplomacy. Specifically, the dissertation contributes to our understanding of public diplomacy's role in soft power by testing the ability of strategic narratives of public diplomacy to enact soft power. The results of the study allowed developing a conceptual model that contributes to our understanding of the relationship between strategic narratives and soft power and demonstrates, to the extent possible, how the influence of soft power does or does not take place. The empirical part of this dissertation explored and described how Russia deploys strategic narratives, derived from its soft power sources, to answer the question of how and if soft power can be enacted via strategic narratives.

First, the dissertation expands our understanding of the relationship between public diplomacy, soft power, and strategic narratives. This dissertation contributes to theory development by examining and explaining how narratives as power resources

operate. Through an examination of strategic narratives at different levels, this study demonstrated in what ways strategic narratives contribute to the enactment of soft power and thus provide strategies for soft power conversion into influence. The conceptual model offered in this dissertation further explains how public diplomacy projects strategic narratives and by doing so enables the soft power enactment.

Second, the task of this dissertation was to investigate the formation, projection, and reception of strategic narratives used by the Russian Federation. This is the first study that traced the development and deployment of strategic narratives across stages, which constitutes an important contribution to the research literature on strategic narratives. In addition, this study contributes specifically to our understanding of Russia's public diplomacy efforts and attempts to wield influence on global public opinion.

Third, this dissertation highlights the importance of the narrative formation stage that has been neglected by previous studies. Therefore, the investigation of strategic narratives at the level of narrative formation is important and has been largely taken for granted in the research literature on strategic narratives (i.e. Roselle et al., 2014; Zaharna, 2016).

Further, the study of narrative formation highlighted methodological limitations of the narrative analysis and demonstrated the need to incorporate analysis of narrative frames, treating narrative characteristics as frames. Studies on strategic narratives do not provide methodological and/or theoretical suggestions on documenting the strategic narrative formation and narrative operationalization in a way that can be transferable to later stages of narrative development. Studying narrative formation is a complex

process that can take different forms. This dissertation approached the study of the narrative formation with an assumption that narratives emerge out of pre-existing ideas and may represent themes and historical references. The structure of strategic narratives at the level of formation may contain many different characteristics that can be treated as narrative frames. Some narrative frames may be emphasized more than others, potentially altering the narrative structure

Fourth, this research extends the work of Miskimmon et al. (2014) on strategic narratives by proposing an intermediate stage between the narrative projection and narrative reception. This intermediate stage is conceptualized as the narrative diffusion stage, which demonstrates how and whether strategic narratives reach the discursive environment of the target state. This is where strategic narratives are being diffused, not necessarily received or accepted. The diffusion of the strategic narrative at this level often implies narrative contestation and determines whether a strategic narrative to be accepted or rejected. This is both a theoretical and practical contribution because it not only illustrates the limitations and constraints of strategic narratives and their ability to enact soft power but also suggests a potential measure for strategic narrative effectiveness. As such, depending on the narrative diffusion, strategic narratives then can be accepted or rejected by the general public. In a way, the intermediate stage of diffusion facilitates the acceptance or rejection of the narrative.

Fifth, the role of events and the time-bound need for strategic narratives was highlighted as one of the contributions of this dissertation, not only informing our understanding of strategic narratives but also invoking the existing literature on public

opinion formation, which, although not introduced in this dissertation, provides food for thought and indicates potential direction for future research.

Sixth, the dissertation addresses the role and relationship between the concepts of public relations, public diplomacy, and soft power, thus propelling public relations theory development. While strategic narratives address the formation, projection, diffusion, and reception of ideas in the international system, it is through the functional and technical affordances of public relations and public diplomacy that strategic narratives are able to enact soft power and possibly to convert soft power into influence. Further, the literature synthesis promotes the understanding of the relationship between public diplomacy and public relations by presenting public diplomacy research in the context of public relations scholarship, summarizing and presenting the four public relations approaches to public diplomacy.

Seventh, this dissertation treats strategic narratives not as the end in itself that is capable of singularly explain how international affairs/relations are being formed. Rather, this dissertation submits that those strategic narratives, as political actors deploy them, shape the way we understand and interpret power. As Castells (2001) argued, communication changes how power works. Political actors project narratives with the purpose of achieving specific goals in international relations. In this sense, projected narratives about soft power sources may help enact soft power. This is an important distinction from Miskimmon's conceptualization of strategic narratives. An overall soft power argument here is that strategic narratives help enact soft power, although not all narratives are capable of producing change or wield power. Therefore, only individual narratives will be able to enact soft power. As such, this dissertation contributes to the

discussion of the strategic narratives as essential elements to understand how strategic narratives, when accepted by foreign publics, can shape interest and preferences (making others want what you want – Nye's definition of soft power) of these foreign publics. Additionally, while strategic narratives as conceptualized by Miskimmon et al. (2014) address the questions of formation, projection, and reception of ideas within the international system, it is through the functional affordances of public relations and public diplomacy that strategic narratives can enact soft power.

Finally, by examining a specific case study of Russia's strategic narratives' formation, projection, diffusion, and reception, this dissertation builds toward a proposed conceptual framework that positions soft power as a discursive environment that can be disabling or enabling. This idea is consistent with the notion of soft power as an environment in which individual communication transactions take place, as the author of this dissertation recently argued in another study (Klyueva & Tsetsura, 2015). Notably, the dissertation submits that public relations and public diplomacy shape the discursive soft power environment via strategic narratives.

In terms of practical applications, this dissertation offers a framework through which practitioners may examine Russia's informational efforts specifically, and the communication influence in general. The notion of strategic narratives may provide a lens for policy analysis and policy formation. Many scholars and practitioners discuss soft power in relation to public diplomacy, often suggesting using soft power to enhance the achievement of political goals by nation states. However, instrumentalization and operationalization of soft power use on the practical level was lacking. By offering ways to analyze and trace strategic narratives, this dissertation adds to the discussion of

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soft power instrumentalization. Such knowledge can be relevant for both scholars and practitioners.

Future Directions in Research

This dissertation investigated the strategic narratives of public diplomacy and the opportunities they provide for the enactment of soft power. The findings of this dissertation open new avenues for research of how soft power operates through communication and what role public relations and public diplomacy play in it.

In general, this dissertation is a case study that investigated the strategic narratives of Russia, projected via its public diplomacy tools. While this study provides valuable insights, conceiving soft power as a discursive environment created via strategic narrative provides ample opportunity for public relations and public diplomacy researchers to expand the study of strategic narratives on other countries and regions to formulate a more rounded understanding of how soft power can be enacted via strategic narratives, or otherwise.

To build the theory further and develop new conceptual models, future studies must pay more attention to the process of narrative formation. The existing scholarship will benefit from developing a more robust instrument for capturing and measuring the process of narrative formation. Such instrument needs to take into consideration later stages of narrative development, such as narrative projection and narrative reception. In addition, future studies must branch out and examine potential sources of strategic narratives beyond foreign policy documents, as utilized in this study.

The proposed idea of narrative structure and frames as narrative characteristics needs to be explored further. The examination of how and to what extent structure of

strategic narratives changes when narratives move from projection to reception, and how emphasizing certain narrative frames can affect the narrative structure, will prove insightful for both public relations and public diplomacy scholars and practitioners.

Another potential research area for public relations and public diplomacy scholars is the investigation of the diffusion stage of strategic narratives and the process of narrative contestation, whether in the form of narrative battles or meaning co-creation across different media, both traditional and participatory. The diffusion stage is where the reception and retention of strategic narratives are defined. However, the meaning and interpretation of strategic narratives happen in the context of a relationship between actors. This can be researched from the relational perspective of relationship building, and public relations have the opportunity here to expand our understanding of strategic narratives through relational approach. This can be addressed by different methodological approaches, including discourse analysis, semantic network analysis, qualitative content analysis as well as rhetorical analysis. Further, such research may incorporate the examination of what sources of soft power are being utilized for soft power enactment and how the context and the discursive environment affect the projection and reception of the narrative. In doing so, careful consideration must be paid to uncovering social and political implications of different strategic narrative and their role in the evolution of social and political consciousness.

The examination of the diffusion stage and narrative contestation invites research not only on narrative battles but also, as Zaharna (2016) argued, identity battles. Future studies on strategic narratives and public diplomacy must consider identity and its role in image cultivation, as previous research indicated that images of

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nations often manifest national identities. Because the mediation and projection of the nation's images, identities, and foreign policies often occur via strategic narratives of public diplomacy, the examination of strategic narratives and identity could be conceptualized as identity management through strategic narratives. Constructivist theories, including the social construction of reality, may inform such future studies.

The future research will also benefit from examining the strategic narratives that are deployed and projected by non-state actors. This might include examining the role of corporations and non-profit organization in the formation of strategic narratives. In addition, scholars must venture out and investigate the non-mediated projection of strategic narrative, examining other sources and opportunities for the strategic narrative projection beyond international broadcasting. This includes narratives that surround educational and cultural exchanges, social corporate responsibility programs of the transnational corporations and international sporting events such as Olympic Games.

The role of events in narrative projection and reception requires further examination and exploration, possibly through an incorporation of the existing communication theories, including theories of framing, agenda setting, and public opinion formation. This may provide further opportunities to study the relationship between the pre-existing narratives at the level of narrative formation and the projected narratives tied to specific events in the world that affect narrative projection. Further studies should investigate the association between events, political climate, and strategic narratives.

Limitations

No study is without limitation. There are several limitations to this study that need to be taken into consideration when interpreting its findings. First of all, this is an exploratory research of strategic narratives limited to one specific country – Russia. While the findings of this dissertation are insightful, they are case-specific and limited in their ability to explain narrative projection and reception for other advocate states. Second, this study looked at the narrative formation from a single angle – foreign policy documents. However, there are more potential sources from which strategic narratives may originate such as presidential addresses, speeches and elite political discourse in general (Miskimmon et al., 2014).

Another limitation of this study is related to the methodological choices of the researcher. Content analysis has several limitations. While content analysis is well suited for being used with other research techniques, including qualitative analysis, content analysis simplifies complex issues and processes to allow for counting. Wimmer and Dominick (2006) criticized content analysis arguing that it is reductive when dealing with complex texts, it disregards context and may not explain the "why" of the content.

Qualitative analysis of the narrative formation is a subjective process that can be biased. In addition, the Russia Today sample may not have represented the full scope of Russia Today's coverage. Not all related content could have been posted on the RT's official website, and so all broadcasted stories relevant to the identified narratives and studied period may not have been included.

Conclusion

This dissertation utilized a narrative approach to a communication phenomenon of soft power as its overarching theoretical framework and demonstrated how public relations and public diplomacy may facilitate the enactment of soft power via strategic narratives.

Soft power is central to the understanding of international communication and international relations today. Although soft power received significant attention in the scholarly literature and is used as a buzzword for politicians and journalists, nevertheless the research explaining how the influence of soft power takes places and how one can enact soft power is rather limited. Because soft power is often used as a justification for public diplomacy spending and as an ad-hoc measure of its success or failure, this study offers a theoretical examination of public relations approaches to public diplomacy and explains how soft power can be enacted. The dissertation also suggests analytical instruments for understanding the process of soft power enactment. Specifically, this dissertation advocates discussing soft power enactment through strategic narratives. Narratives play a role in constructing political and social consciousness and in getting people "to want what you want" (Lucaites & Condit, 1985; Miskimmon et al., 2014; Nye 2008). Therefore, in this study soft power is conceived as a fluid and discursive environment contrasted and contested via strategic narratives and in which an advocate country promotes its policies and values.

It is argued here that soft power enactment depends on whether the strategic narratives are able to deliver the soft power sources of attraction across stages of strategic narrative deployment. As such, soft power creates a discursive and fluid

environment that can be either enabling or disabling when strategic narratives succeed or fail to be accepted by the publics of the target state. This dissertation argued that public relations and public diplomacy help shape the soft power environment via strategic narratives.

While strategic narratives address the process of formation, projection, diffusion, and reception of ideas in the international system, it is through the functional and technical affordances of public relations and public diplomacy that strategic narratives enact soft power and wield influence. Many studies on soft power seek to identify whether audiences find one's country attractive, appealing, welcoming or worth emulating. The attractiveness of a country is treated as a status quo. Examining soft power through the lenses of strategic narratives delivered via public diplomacy and public relations strategies allows one to understand better how shared meaning and understanding of a policy or issue comes to be.

As part of the communication strategy, narratives and storytelling is an advanced public relations technique and can be a powerful persuasion and communication tool. As such, public relations' functional affordances allow narratives to be deployed through its practices of communication and relationship management. Public relations plays an important role in foreign policy by building and cultivating relationships, researching and scanning environments, building communities around a foreign policy issue, facilitating dialogue and socializing foreign policies.

Similarly, narratives in public diplomacy are an important component of the communication strategy, through which messages and themes are being delivered to achieve legitimacy and support of foreign policy. Due to its functional affordances,

public diplomacy can project the a compelling narrative capable of persuasively explaining events and policies of the target state via its functional practices such as international broadcasting, exchanges, head-of-state visits, etc.

The researcher treats public relations and public diplomacy as similar yet distinct communication functions that belong to non-state and state actors respectively. These state and nonstate actors, directly and indirectly, contribute to the soft power environment of a country by projecting strategic narratives. State actors fulfill this function via public diplomacy, nonstate actors – via public relations. Such conceptualization of soft power allows explaining when and how soft power can be enacted into influence. The argument goes that public relations and public diplomacy provide conversion strategies by facilitating a strategic narrative.

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Appendix A: Coding Book

	Variable	**Description**	**Instructions/Examples**
V1	Document type	The type of the document from which categorization of the	News article, op-ed
V2	Source name	What is the origin of the document	Record the name of the publication
V3	Year/month	The year & month the document was published	Record the year a document was published
V4	Full date	The date the document was published	Record the date a document was published
V5	Source (speaker)	Domestic Government Sources: (1) Russian government official or government agency Domestic Non-Government Sources: (2) Russian scientists, researchers, analysts (3) Russian non-governmental organization, NGOs (4) Russian public figures, such as actors (5) Other Russian source (with no mention of business affiliation/occupation) International Sources: (6) Non-Russian government officials or government agencies (7) Non-Russian scientists/researchers/analysts (8) Non-Russian NGOs (9) Non-Russian public figures, such as actors (10) Other non-Russian sources (with no mention of business affiliation/occupation)	Record the appropriate corresponding number of the source (speaker)

V6	Type of strategic narrative	Defines the level the projected narratives (1) International - describes how the world is structured (Cold War, War on Terror, Rise of China). (2) National - describes what the story of the state or nation is, what values and goals it has (US promoting democracy). (3) Issue-level explains why a policy is needed, and how it will be effectively implemented.	Record the corresponding number for the narrative
V7	Narrative (textual)	Description of an event in context	Copy and paste text of the narrative
V8	Level of salience	Defines the level of salience of a particular narrative on a 3-point scale: (1) "negligible attention"- barely mentions identified narratives; (2) "moderate attention" - devotes some attention to the identified narratives; (3) "Significant attention" - news story primarily focuses on the identified narrative, mentions the narrative clearly, and devotes significant part of the story to the issues relevant to the narrative.	Record the corresponding number for the level of salience
V9	Sources of soft power used in the narrative	Reference to either cultural values, elements of pop or high culture, or policies: 1. Values 2. Culture 3. Policy	Record which source of soft power is referenced in the narrative
V10	Tone of the narrative	Records tone of the narrative in the context of the source on a 3 point scale: (1) tone that disfavors the narrative through the use of negative or critical words; (2) tone that is neutral through providing or restating simple facts; (3) tone that favors the identified narrative through the use of positive and supportive words.	Record the corresponding number for the narrative's tone