

POLICY BRIEF

No. 07, 2024

Integrating Eastern and Western Europe: A Framework for Trauma-informed Public Diplomacy and Journalism

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Highlights

1. To prevent and mitigate the forming of nationalist-based identities built upon unresolved historical and social traumas, this policy brief proposes a series of initiatives on trauma-informed public diplomacy and journalism.
2. The basic principles of trauma-informed public diplomacy and journalism encompass a set of guidelines that include international and diplomatic relations, national interests, political culture and psychology, national identity and international communications.
3. To effectively implement the strategy of trauma-informed public diplomacy and journalism, the government should solve the practical issues of social and cultural cooperation. This involves striking a balance between national identity and the principles of multiculturalism, overcoming cultural and language barriers, considering the protection of cultural and language rights and ensuring the rights of national minorities.

Introduction

When the social and security situation becomes inflamed in a country or region, this process can amplify the links between shared historical trauma and national identity, hindering the goals for stabilizing the situation. The helplessness felt by the population in the face of the current danger may be rooted in longstanding fear generated by past trauma, leading to the reassertion of political power that emphasizes the dominance of national identity. However, to avoid radicalization and nationalism, it is necessary for both leaders and civilians to become aware of the dynamics of collective trauma and learn to distinguish historical traumas from the current situation.

Communities suffering from collective trauma may seek self-isolation to avoid remembering or making sense of difficult emotions. As a result of social trauma, key links and traditional cultural attitudes, which are meant to maintain balance and heal communities, can disappear (Faler, 2018). Thus, long-term isolation leads to the emergence of a psychological barrier among the older population in their perception and understanding of political, economic, and security updates. These attitudes are passed on to the next generation, who, if they don't have any traumatic experiences in their lifetime, may feel nostalgic for the past.

To prevent and mitigate the forming of nationalist-based identities built upon unresolved historical and social traumas, we propose a series of initiatives on trauma-informed public diplomacy and journalism. The goal of these initiatives is to disseminate information regarding the achievements and spiritual values of the nation, restore cultural resilience, cultivate historical empathy for the emotional experiences of others, overcome existential anxieties and fear of annihilation among the public, and assist other countries in this context.

Publications and Theoretical Background

The theoretical foundation of trauma-informed public diplomacy and journalism is shaped by the influence of political, economic, security, and technological changes in international relations. These changes encompass the evolution of globalization, the growing influence of the public on foreign policy, and the transformation of the nature of state power.

The basic principles of trauma-informed public diplomacy and journalism encompass a set of guidelines that include international and diplomatic relations, national interests, political culture and psychology, national identity, and international communications

Research on the international dimension of trauma, memory, and emotions, along with their manifestations in various cultural contexts aims to explore the international political dimension of feeling, suffering, forgetting, remembering, and memorializing traumatic events. It also investigates their functioning as social practices for overcoming trauma and creating social change (Resende, Budryte, 2013) as it analyses changes in public diplomacy under the influence of a more belligerent international environment, the tensions between national interest and mutual understanding, which evolve and change due to political shifts (Di Martino, 2021).

A. B. Lerner, the Deputy Director of Royal Holloway's Centre for International Security (RHISC), developed a theory of collective trauma as a phenomenon that transitions from individual to social and interacts with various political conditions and competing priorities. He claims that collective

trauma not only shapes divisions between 'us' and 'them', forming the international system, but also frames the logic of intergenerational interaction (Lerner, 2022).

Research on discursive contestations over emotion norms is conducted by A. Dolea (2023) who focuses on the role of emotions and trauma in a world shaken by many crises; C. Duncombe (2019) who investigates the role of emotion in digital diplomacy strategies, exploring the impact of interactions, emotions, and identity in social media on current challenges related to digital disinformation; and S. E. Graham (2014) who explores emotions in the context of discourse about values, examining how emotional expression reflects cultural differences, influences cross-cultural dialogue and constitutes collective identities.

Trauma-informed journalism issues are dissected in detail by experts and journalists who have researched and worked with trauma survivors. This has led to better, more accurate stories aimed at helping and protecting survivors (Miller, 2022). For example, the Dart Center style guide is designed as a reference for reporters, editors, and producers offering evidence-informed guidance on news choices, language usage, and ethics in reporting on the impact of trauma on individuals, families, and communities (Dart Center, 2021).

Additionally, research is being conducted on trauma-informed training and guidelines, comfort in contacting survivors, and the personal impact of reporting on trauma (Cherry, 2021), focusing on support for both the reporting journalists and those who have been traumatized.

As a result, the basic principles of trauma-informed public diplomacy and journalism encompass a set of guidelines that include international and diplomatic relations, national interests, political culture and psychology, national identity, international communications, etc. These guidelines establish an original research space grounded in the study of the interactions and mutual influences of national cultures, government institutions, national identity, and collective memory as social phenomena of cooperation.

Main Part

Eastern and Western Europe share a common history and culture, along with psychological characteristics of their populations, political transparency, and the efficiency of government activities, export and investment industries, as well as tourism. These factors shape the mutual perceptions of each other. The strengths of interactions between the regions are based on a rich cultural heritage, an attractive tourism destination, booming pop culture, a high educational level, support for locally formed connections' community by community, and a deepening of European integration. The limitations of their interaction include inappropriate national assessment of the cultural potential of the Eastern European countries, insufficient state funding of culture in Eastern European countries, political, economic, and security instability in Eastern and Western Europe, and low national self-awareness among Eastern European citizens.

Europe, promoting unilateral activity from East to West, leading to the perception of Eastern Europe as a source of brain drain.

- Implementing processes dedicated to overcoming longstanding stereotypes about Western Europe, which will be solved by scientific and cultural activities of Western European representatives in Eastern Europe. Eastern European societies were traumatized by Soviet ideology concerning the interpretation of the Western community and its lifestyle. Since citizens in Eastern Europe mainly speak one language, it is easy to distort information about Western European cultures.
- Demonstrating, through media outreach, public dissemination campaigns, and documentary filmmakers from Eastern Europe, the creation of thematic blocks on TV and radio, and multilingual online resources about sensitive historical events, common cultural and linguistic features.

Trauma-informed Public Diplomacy

In the context of trauma-informed public diplomacy, it is important to recognize that sensitive historical events such as genocide, famine, war, armed aggression, and deportation can lead to misperceptions among both academics and the general public. Therefore, greater attention needs to be directed towards discovering and demonstrating cultural and linguistic features between both sides and reconstructing moral and ideological principles of society's development.

To successfully continue the postwar integration between Eastern and Western Europe, we propose:

- Developing policies, programs, and platforms to attract Western academics, teachers, and youth to conduct research and study in Eastern European countries. Currently, two main trends are noticeable: first, a preference for academics and professionals to conduct scientific and educational activities in Western countries; second, the scientific and educational activities of Eastern European representatives do not extend beyond the region's borders. This is currently happening because of insufficient financial support from Eastern European governments to encourage participation in research and training for professionals in both Eastern and Western

The goal of trauma-informed public diplomacy is to dispel negative historical, cultural, and linguistic narratives about Eastern and Western Europe

The goal of trauma-informed public diplomacy is to dispel negative historical, cultural, and linguistic narratives about Eastern and Western Europe. The initiators may include the Ministries of Education, Science, and Culture, with the involvement of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs from Eastern European countries. The intended audience includes academics, educators, cultural activists, NGO representatives, and youth.

Trauma-informed Journalism

In the context of trauma-informed journalism, we propose the following principles:

- Journalists, like other citizens, are born into and belong to traumatized societies, so their reporting activities tend to be conducted through this lens, unless they have worked through dismantling their perceptions and understanding the traumas of their country's past.

- Journalists must commit to rigorous, science-based education and training that is standard among the profession, available through credentialed higher education and graduate programs.
- The development of a journalism network in Eastern Europe is a necessary part of supporting fact-based, unbiased journalism so that the profession can reflect the highest ethical standards demanded by such work.
- Journalists, with experience in historical intelligence activity can serve as mentors for other colleagues who would like to start a similar activity, as well as for youth who can transition into active actors, learning a new profession and overcoming their historical and social trauma.
- It is important to create conditions for the distribution of relevant multilingual content in Western media.

The primary objective of trauma-informed journalism in our proposal is to generate fact-based, feature articles, and news coverage about historical and social traumas and their impact on both Eastern and Western Europe. Proposed initiators would be media outlets from Eastern Europe, which can prepare news articles and other content for the public.

The psychological portrait of Eastern European nations is sometimes perceived by the rest of the world through the prism of disinformation and manipulation, artificially imposed on both European and global levels

Eastern European countries have only recently intensified efforts to transform the perception of the state at the global and EU government levels, despite still showing uneven progress. The psychological portrait of Eastern European nations is sometimes perceived by the rest of the world through the prism of disinformation and manipulation, artificially imposed on both European and global levels.

We propose the further development of public discourse under government institutions. Leadership is required to promote greater awareness and education on overcoming national barriers, creating an open and transparent media space, devoid of propaganda and disinformation. Solving the issue

of spreading disinformation can be complex and challenging since the Internet and other technologies can disseminate any information without restrictions. Only measures formed at the global level, without compromising freedom of speech, will be able to reduce the level of disinformation but not overcome it completely. In the short term, we propose technological updates that require author identification and blocking capabilities for the dissemination of discrediting information. Additionally, we recommend the modernization of legislation in EU countries concerning prosecution for the dissemination of fake news, disinformation, and hate speech, the increase in centres engaged in fact-checking and refutation of false data, deepening of knowledge in media literacy, and enforcing ethical conduct of journalists and their culpability in spreading fake news. In the long term, the mentioned processes could become a global trend of leading in ethical conduct related to disseminating information.

Therefore, to effectively implement the strategy of trauma-informed public diplomacy and journalism, the government should solve the practical issues of social and cultural cooperation. This involves striking a balance between national identity and the principles of multiculturalism, overcoming cultural and language barriers considering the protection of cultural and language rights and ensuring the rights of national minorities.

Regarding interaction among European countries, we propose prioritizing institutions that respect the cultural variety of all European states and their populations, observing linguistic and ethnocultural diversity, and respect for the of cultures of people who have migrated to Europe. It should be added that the content and results of

such interactions are mainly determined by ethnic identity, psychology of communities, and their moral and cultural values.

We propose that social and cultural cooperation serves as a means of overcoming inequalities between communities with the resources to further preserve and develop their language and culture and those limited in their cultural rights. It should be noted that cultural identity is important for preserving the cultural diversity of the region, making dialogue a priority for forming intercultural understanding between Eastern and Western Europe. The development of strategies and tactics for implementing social and cultural cooperation, establishing

a joint European forum on sensitive historical events to explain their historical background, as well as thematic scientific research will contribute to the formation of a sense of confidence regarding the possibilities of overcoming collective trauma.

Conclusions and Discussions

Our proposal for implementing a trauma-informed public diplomacy strategy and trauma-informed journalism will focus on:

1. Overcoming widespread fear among various population groups, including concerns about losing control over management processes within both internal and external government institutions. In the population, fear gives rise to mistrust of the government and scepticism about its ability to provide both public and national security. Government institutions are concerned with losing trust among citizens and the international community which has occurred, in part, due to the uncontrolled influence of the Internet and social media on the psycho-emotional state of an individual, social groups and/or the population.
2. Discerning between events and information content that can evoke genuine sympathy and empathy among the population and the international community and those that involve manipulative influences. Manipulations of sympathy and empathy, especially during wars, armed confrontations, or historical insults, are challenging to detect, and the daily debunking of fake information only partially addresses the problem. Efforts to evoke sympathy and empathy can become a 'game', which contributes to the development of distrust in government institutions. When this is challenged by citizens, it can often deepen the government's efforts to militarize the national and international information space.
3. Supporting measures that can help mitigate and heal prevalent anxiety among citizens and social groups when their psychological needs, are not met, leading to a range of emotions. It is necessary to consider the diversity of cultural and psycho-emotional characteristics that may impact their perception of their historic identity. Social

groups or the population may seek to avoid interaction with other social groups that 'destroy' their perception of national or international reality, a tendency reinforced by government restrictions aimed at improving national security measures.

4. Overcoming aggression and antipathy that arise in the population and the international community regarding diverse interpretations of historical and contemporary events. Pervasive aggression and antipathy transform the established order into chaos, which can be shaped and fuelled by criminal and terrorist groups, as well as religious and national fanaticism.

All these strategies for transformation can promote social resilience – 'capacity of social groups and communities to recover from or respond positively to crisis's (Maguire, Hagan, 2007, p. 16). Social resilience is built through 'resilience narratives' of competent narrators who can make a 'sustained effort at reconstructing some kind of coherence and continuity' (Basseler, 2019, p. 28) and can offer the interpretive framework that enables citizens to recognize historical trauma narratives and historical amnesia narratives (Matoba, 2024).

When developing a strategy for trauma-informed public diplomacy and journalism, it is necessary to consider how personal emotions can be transferred to understanding national and international issues

We recommend that practitioners of trauma-informed public diplomacy and journalism undergo training to learn how to become competent narrators, participating in, for example, a 'collective trauma integration process' (CTIP), developed by Thomas Hübl (Hübl, Avritt, 2020). This process facilitates the development of a grounded, conscious awareness within individuals or group. During these sessions, emotional, cognitive, and physical shifts may unlock muted collective trauma, bringing about a greater conscious perception of the relationship to a group or the wider world. Wagner et al. (2022) report that the trauma-informed large group process based on CTIP in Germany could raise public awareness of resilience narratives and overcome the absence of reflexivity to respond to historical trauma, current crises, and social polarization in Germany.

When developing a strategy for trauma-informed public diplomacy and journalism, it is necessary to consider how personal emotions can be transferred to understanding national and international issues. Additionally, it is important to consider the transformation of personal emotions into national or international ones. The availability and ubiquity of digital technologies have led to an exacerbation of cognitive dissonance not only at the individual level but also at the collective level. The clash of conflicting knowledge, ideas, beliefs, or behavioural attitudes within the population intensifies due to misinformation and manipulation, deepening collective trauma.

At the diplomatic level, it is necessary to counter false data by providing infographics and high-level visuals, continuously educating the public of common historical facts and emphasizing narratives that focus on traditional cultural norms, shared grief and loss. Policies can be enforced through legal means, focusing on strengthening the responsibility of individuals, groups or organizations that spread misinformation and manipulating the established psycho-emotional attitudes of society. At the political level, this policy will contribute to the formation of prerequisites for eliminating the destructive influence of a national traumatic image or a traumatic interpretation of events on public attitudes, as well as to avoid speculation about the facts of a collective memory. At the technical level, data collection should be conducted in an ethical manner.

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Publisher: United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS), Bruges, Belgium