



Solidarity for Ukraine – 01/03/2023- issue 13 – Game of dupes

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The Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (iriv) is associated to the international solidarity for Ukraine attacked by Russia on 24th February 2022. After a pandemic that has weakened democratic countries with the disturbing rise of conspiracy theories and hate speech on social networks, we do hope this war in Europe will be an opportunity to reflect on a new solidarity, among European and international allies. This issue is the third for 2023 and the 13th since the beginning of the war in Ukraine. This issue is about a double language and a double game. “Smart power” is sometimes ambiguous – an effective strategy of influence aims to convince and win membership (Ukrainian example), not to brutalize and play a curious game of dupes (Russian example). The approach suggested by American researcher Joseph Nye (already

mentioned in the December 2022 - issue 10 of our newsletter- “The shadow of a doubt”) is still relevant to the evolution of the conflict. It is surprising to see the same behaviour of defiance, coercion and even brutality when they have not succeeded in the past years. In the face of so much misunderstanding, of a feeling of dialogue of the deaf or of a broken record “never ending story”, we can wonder about the opportunity and relevance of such a game of dupes.

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* the logo was designed by Caritas Canada in February 2022

Ambiguity of “smart power”

Hard power is crucial in a world where states try to preserve their independence from states or non-state groups ready to resort to violence. It is at the heart of any national security strategy. It is associated with the ability to compel; it derives from a country’s military or economic power. Nuclear weapons have been a powerful and convincing deterrent from Hiroshima.(1). It was a first ground of rivalry between the western countries and the satellite countries of the USSR from the beginning of the Cold War (2). It has often been brandished by authoritarian regimes to terrorize their neighbours and to impose themselves brutally (North Korea). The threat has been used by the Russian president since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine. On the contrary, soft power is linked to the attractiveness of culture, political ideals and state policies. The concept has its origin in the criticisms of «American imperialism» and its supposed decline (3).

Faced with (many) criticisms, particularly about the concrete effectiveness of «soft power», but also about its evaluation, Joseph Nye, professor of international relations at Harvard after having been part of two democratic governments (4), proposed a new concept: the smart power. The ideal according to Nye is a clever combination of «soft» and «hard» that he calls «smart» (intelligent) power. The concept refers to “the methods of influence developed by a State that are not based on violence but on ideological or cultural elements in order to satisfy the interests of the nation implementing them”. A State always has the choice between brutal methods such as coercion, or on the contrary of finer means such as incitement or seduction. In all cases, the aim is to influence political decisions by making certain choices appear as priorities, so that their credibility and legitimacy are imposed.

This strategy of influence is aimed at public opinion, which is crucial to winning psychological war, an essential component of modern conflicts. The war of images, on social networks or through more traditional media (television, radio, print, etc.) aims to rally public opinion to its cause. Opinion leaders are responsible for relaying the messages to support a storytelling. Influence is an approach that seems constructive and induce a positive message. But manipulation is never far away when the means and strategies implemented are not precisely «smart»..

A retrograde and reactionary smart power in Russia

The argument used by the Russian president to justify the aggression of Ukraine was to present himself as a «white knight» who intervened with Russian-speaking populations persecuted by Ukrainian nationalists, heirs of extremist movements that supported the Nazi regime during the Second World War (5). According to the British historian Antony Beevor (6), a former officer of the British army and recognized expert on World War II, even though Vladimir Putin is a former officer of the KGB, the armed arm of the Soviet Union whose disappearance he openly regrets, he is not a “red” (communist) but a “white” (tzarist) .

His intellectual references are indeed those developed by the white Russians, who fled Russia during the civil war of 1917-1921. The «white» theories are taken up by the most ultranationalist Russian theorists, the «hawks» who pushed to attack Ukraine. The symbols accrediting this affiliation are numerous in the palace built by Vladimir Putin on the Black Sea. The double-headed eagle, symbol of the tsars, replaced the sickle and hammer. Moreover he repatriated the remains of two “white” leaders – Generals Anton Denikine and Vladimir Kappel. He constantly refers to the Orthodox Church, which has become a state religion since the revision of the Russian constitution in 2020 (7). He instrumentalizes a religious feeling (close to superstition especially in the countryside) by borrowing a rhetoric of holy war to break the supposed «satanism» of the Ukrainians and the Western world. The old saying of decadence, borrowed by the worst totalitarian regimes (Fascism and Nazism) is known together with a pledge of morality provided by the unconditional support of Metropolitan Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, who has been condemned by other more convincing religious leaders (8).

On the international scene, many «leaders» were sensitive to this discourse of a return of the «eternal Russian soul», with the reinforcement of stumbling species. The most convincing argument of the Russian president to his population, in addition to the terror exercised by corrupt security services (police and secret services), is the fear of a civil war – it has posed as soon as it came to power as the best bulwark against disorder. Yet the «official discourse» is beating away in the face of a massive mobilization of men of age to go to the front, transformed into «cannon fodder». Human life has no more value to Putin than the “mujiks” in the days of the tsars, who were persecuted and mistreated.

A “smart power” building and looking to the future in Ukraine

One of the most positive effects of the war in Ukraine is to weaken the Ukrainian oligarchs (9).. The fight against corruption has become one of the spearheads of the strategy led by the Ukrainian president, at a time when the country is calling for more western military support in the face of a new Russian mobilization. Ukraine is waging an exemplary war against the Russian army and the Ukrainian government is preparing its future within the European Union by giving pledges to its Western allies in the United States and Europe. The American economic magazine *Forbes* has released from its ranking several Ukrainian oligarchs stripped of their nationality because of their proximity to Russia.

In November 2021, before the war began, Volodymyr Zelensky passed a law known as “desoligarchisation” creating a national register of oligarchs to fight against their political influence with three of the following four conditions to be included: holding media, being in a monopoly position in an industry, participating in political life and owning at least 55 million Euros. Oligarchs had to give up their television channels, powerful vectors of influence to make their business grow. The hope is that from the war emerges a more competitive economy with less political interference that will have more chance of entering the European Union (10) - a victory for President Zelensky with the support of the President of the European Commission, which may become a reality against all odds.

On January 23, 2023, a dozen Ukrainian government officials were fired by Volodymyr Zelensky, who “takes a hard line” in the face of a series of corruption scandals (11). Five regional governors, four deputy ministers and two heads of a government agency must resign, in addition to the deputy attorney general and the deputy chief of staff of the president, Kirilo Tymoshenk. The Ukrainian newspaper Pravda has dubbed him the “godfather of the regions” because he has enjoyed business favours in public procurement since the beginning of the war.

On the 1st of February 2023, waves of searches and dismissals were carried out against officials and personalities accused of corruption – the homes of an oligarch, a former Minister of the Interior, senior officials of the Ministry of Defence. The entire customs directorate was dismissed and searches were carried out at tax office (12).

Who benefits from crime?

By dint of exhausting an «adversary» for years, he becomes an «intimate enemy», a «beast to be slaughtered». Several scenarios are possible. The first is to get the job done – you managed to “break your enemy” by preventing them from harming them. Baffled, drunk with blows, he throws the towel. The second scenario is the opposite effect of the one expected – the opponent is galvanized in the face of so much adversity and low blows. The disproportionality of the attacks, their brutality, their repetition stimulate imagination and combativity. A third scenario is a huge feeling of weariness and a real disappointment in his opponent who after a final assault finally speaks to worthy interlocutors. You can't please everybody, but you know exactly who you want to displease. The low blows eventually discredit the perpetrator of the attacks.

Vladimir Putin decided to attack his Ukrainian «brother». He did not prefer the diplomatic «soft» way, he took up arms. He thought he would win a Pyrrhic victory, the human price (thousands of dead soldiers) never stopped him. It is not out of idealism, out of fraternity, out of "historical" solidarity, as he has wrongly explained. No one was fooled. Volodymyr Zelensky did not choose war. His ambition was to apply in reality what he had suggested in his successful comedy series “The Servant of the People” – to bring Ukraine into an “ideal” 21st century by restoring democracy (free elections, plurality of the media, rule of law with a separation of powers, etc.), fighting the endemic corruption of his country that undermines the feeling of belonging and membership of the population, and making Ukrainians proud of their country. He did not expect in his 2019 election to face a total and brutal war with his Russian neighbour.

The military strategy as well as the war of influence of the Ukrainian president are in every way exemplary. Ukraine was not defeated; the first scenario was not realized. The Ukrainians are forced to face the Russian aggressor, they have no alternative to hide. The second scenario prevails, an ever-combative Ukraine, with Westerners at its side preparing for a war of greater magnitude across the continent. Whatever the scenario, one year after the beginning of the conflict, what is really the motive of Russia's «crime»? Why such an avalanche of hostilities without ever negotiating

"O death, where is your victory?" (13)

- (1) L'explosion de la bombe atomique a été décidée par le gouvernement américain pour mettre fin de manière radicale à la Seconde guerre mondiale au Japon
- (2) La guerre froide s'est organisée à partir de 1946 avec une Union soviétique de plus en plus hostile à la puissance américaine. Staline a même refusé que le plan Marshall qui a permis à l'Europe de l'Ouest de se reconstruire ne bénéficie aux démocraties populaires alors que les populations sortaient exsangues du conflit le plus meurtrier et destructeur dans l'histoire de l'humanité
- (3) en particulier par l'historien britannique Paul Kennedy en 1987, le réalisateur canadien Denys Arcand en 1986 ou le chercheur américain Herbert Schiller.
- (4) sous-secrétaire d'Etat de Jimmy Carter, puis secrétaire adjoint à la Défense sous *Bill Clinton*
- (5) Bernard Henry Levy décrit très bien dans un article publié le 23 janvier 2023 « L'Ukraine et le génie du judaïsme » qu'il existe deux Ukraine, l'une « une terre de sang pour les juifs » qui a été la terre de la Shoah par balles et persécuté des milliers de familles juifs (dans les ravins de Babi Yar, 33.771 hommes, femmes et enfants juifs tués) ; une autre Ukraine au contraire qui est une terre de dialogue interreligieux où Hanoukka a été célébré en décembre 2022 en pleine guerre par toute la population à Kiev.
<https://laregledujeu.org/2023/01/23/39025/lukraine-et-le-genie-du-judaisme/>
- (6) Antony Beevor « L'oppression et le sang imprègnent l'histoire russe », Le Monde, 13 décembre 2022 propos recueillis par Marc Semo
- (7) Benjamin Quénelle, « La référence à Dieu bientôt dans la Constitution » - le 10/03/2020 - <https://www.la-croix.com/Monde/Europe/Russie-reference-Dieu-bientot-Constitution-2020-03-10-1201083091>
- (8) le Pape François pour les catholiques, Eglise orthodoxe ukrainienne qui ne reconnaît plus son autorité et d'autres chefs religieux « dignes de foi » de religions non chrétiennes
- (9) Julien Bouissou « La guerre affaiblit les oligarques ukrainiens », Le Monde, 4 janvier 2023
- (10) le processus d'adhésion a commencé officiellement le 23 juin 2022, les 27 chefs d'État et de gouvernement de l'Union européenne ont unanimement décidé d'accorder à l'Ukraine le statut de pays candidat à l'adhésion. La Commission européenne avait recommandé aux États membres d'accorder ce statut à l'Ukraine la semaine précédente, le 17 juin.-
https://france.representation.ec.europa.eu/informations/adhesion-de-lukraine-lue-comment-ca-marche-2022-06-24_fr
- (11) The Globe and Mail, cite par le Monde le 25 janvier 2023-
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-ukraine-zelensky-top-officials-resignation/>
- (12) Thomas d'Istria « Le long chemin de Kiev vers l'adhésion à l'UE », Le Monde, 3 février 2023
- (13) Bible, Lettre aux Corinthiens, versets 1 Co 15,54b-55

Contacts utiles

Pour aider l'Ukraine, voici une liste d'associations & ONG - **Source** : <https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/actualites/A15542>

Support Ukraine – une plateforme accessible sur - <https://www.supportukraine.co/>

Croix-Rouge Française - [Croix-Rouge française](#) pour des dons financiers, en soutien de la Croix-Rouge ukrainienne, au Comité International de la Croix-Rouge - <https://www.croix-rouge.fr/Nos-actions/Action-internationale/Rechercher-un-programme/LA-CROIX-ROUGE-FRANCAISE-EN-UKRAINE>

Médecins sans frontières - [fonds d'urgence](#) dans les pays limitrophes de l'Ukraine et cherchent à faire entrer du matériel médical et du personnel. - <https://soutenir.msf.fr/faire-un-don/~mon-don>

Secours populaire - lance un appel aux dons d'urgence à l'Ukraine .- <https://don.secourspopulaire.fr/ukraine/~mon-don>

Protection civile - un appel aux dons pour financer d'autres besoins (défibrillateurs, respirateurs, groupes électrogènes, etc.) : <https://don.protection-civile.org/soutenir>

Fondation de France - lance un [appel à la générosité](#) pour soutenir les centaines de milliers de personnes affectées par le conflit en Pologne et en Roumanie - - <https://dons.fondationdefrance.org/solidarite-avec-les-ukrainiens/~mon-don?>

Agence des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés - situation d'urgence de niveau 3 pour la crise en Ukraine, le plus élevé. L'UNHCR a renforcé ses opérations en Ukraine et dans les pays voisins, pour la soutenir, vous pouvez faire un don : https://donner.unhcr.org/fr/fr-fr/urgence-ukraine?_cv=1

Unicef - un besoin urgent de financement pour répondre aux besoins essentiels des enfants Pour faire un don sur le site Unicef.fr - https://don.unicef.fr/b/mon-don?cid=322&_cv=1

ONG Care International - un [formulaire en ligne de dons d'urgence à l'Ukraine](#) pour apporter une aide d'urgence aux populations et aux réfugiés - - https://soutenir.carefrance.org/mon-don/~mon-don?ns_ira_cr_arg=IyMjIyMjIyMjIyMjIyMjIyMjIyMjIyMjIyMjIyMjIyMjIyMjIyMjIyPkJ6HFA1Y69SN8wBpGdbU49oyB0t9PJwOohrrNCWZ1E1xvYyuCP14dJQ2nrY0C9CFXInHRxueOqPBpQ7tkkn%2F&private_server_time=1672227862538&cid=13&_cv=1

L'ONG française ACTED organise des convois humanitaires pour l'Ukraine

association Solidarités International – une [collecte des fonds](#) pour envoyer des convois de vivres et biens de première nécessité, distribuer de l'eau et des repas aux réfugiés - https://dons.solidarites.org/b/mon-don?cid=880&_cv=1

Plan International, en Pologne, Roumanie et Moldavie, pour apporter aide matérielle et psychosociale aux jeunes ukrainiens et à leur famille, et [sollicite des dons](#) pour ce faire.- <https://formulaire.plan-international.fr/urgence-ukraine/~mon-don>

L'Aide médicale et caritative France-Ukraine - envoi de convois d'aide humanitaire, des soins aux blessés, des échanges de savoir-faire médical, une aide psychologique et organise des colonies de vacances pour les enfants orphelins - HelloAsso - <https://www.helloasso.com/associations/aide%20medicale%20caritative%20france%20ukraine/collectes/aider-ukraine-amurgence-help-ukraine/don>

Le Comité d'aide médicale Ukraine - réfugiés en transit dans l'ouest du pays, et collecte fonds, médicaments et équipements pour l'hébergement et les soins via ses partenaires français, l'association SAFE et l'organisation FONDEMOS. - <http://www.cam-z.org/en/news/121/>

JeVeuxAider.gouv.fr est la plateforme publique du bénévolat, - une page dédiée Mobilisons-nous pour l'Ukraine. - <https://www.jeveuxaider.gouv.fr/engagement/benevolat-ukraine/>

Les Banques alimentaires - une aide d'urgence à apporter aux frontières de l'Ukraine, dans les pays frontaliers accueillant des réfugiés - <https://www.banquealimentaire.org/urgence-ukraine>

La Protection Civile et l'Association des maires de France ont établi une [liste](#) (lits de camps, sacs de couchage, lingettes, conserves, pansements hémostatiques, solutions antiseptiques ...).

L'Association des maires de France a dressé les [lieux de collecte](#) à travers toute la France. Les Maires de France appellent à la [solidarité avec l'Ukraine](#). De nombreuses villes de France organisent des collectes de produits de première nécessité - <https://www.amf.asso.fr/documents-les-maires-france-appellent-la-solidarite-avec-lukraine/41122>

La plateforme officielle « *Je m'engage pour l'Ukraine* » lancée le 8 mars 2022 par le gouvernement pour accompagner les Français souhaitant héberger chez eux des Ukrainiens réfugiés et accueillis en France. - <https://parrainage.refugies.info/>

Les associations, fondations, entreprises et collectivités territoriales peuvent utiliser ce [formulaire en ligne](#) pour renseigner leur capacité d'hébergement. - <https://www.demarches-simplifiees.fr/commencer/hebergement-personne-morale-ukraine>

Bibliothèque sans frontière (BSF) - Depuis le début de l'offensive russe en Ukraine, BSF se mobilise et déploie, partout en Europe, des solutions d'urgence pour l'accueil et l'intégration des populations réfugiées. « Bonjour France » est une application pour smartphone innovante et totalement gratuite, qui propose un apprentissage accéléré du français depuis l'ukrainien, disponible depuis le 19 octobre 2022.

<https://www.bibliosansfrontieres.org/2022/10/14/bsf-lance-bonjour-france-une-application-innovante-dapprentissage-du-francais-pour-les-refugies-ukrainiens/>

La mission catholique de l'Eglise polonaise en France suggère également le lien suivant : <https://mission-catholique-polonaise.pl/polska-we-francji/pere-brzys-la-mcp-lance-une-initiative-nationale-pour-aider-lukraine/> - **Source** : conférence des évêques de France