

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF THE NARRATIVE APPROACH TO STUDYING PROBLEMS OF THE BALANCE OF POWER IN CENTRAL-EASTERN EUROPE

КОНЦЕПТУАЛЬНО-ТЕОРЕТИЧНІ АСПЕКТИ НАРАТИВНОГО ПІДХОДУ ДО ВИВЧЕННЯ ПРОБЛЕМ БАЛАНСУ СИЛ У ЦЕНТРАЛЬНО-СХІДНІЙ ЄВРОПІ

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Abstract

In the international sphere, which is currently in crisis, Central and Eastern Europe remains a region that strives for a stable balance of power. Among the tangled and networked relationships in the region, strategic narratives play a key role in overcoming communicative and cognitive vulnerabilities. This article examines the theoretical aspects of a narrative approach to the study of the properties of the balance of power used by CEE countries to self-identify and negotiate the distribution of power in the region. Using narrative analysis, this article examines how these narratives influence perceptions of the balance of power in the region and delineate networked communication channels.

Key words: narratives, balance of power, Central and Eastern Europe, international communication, discourse, network relations, resilience

Анотація

У міжнародній сфері, що зараз перебуває у кризовому стані, Центральна-Східна Європа залишається регіоном, який прагне до стабільної рівноваги сил. Серед заплутаних та мережових відносин в регіоні стратегічні нарративи відіграють ключову роль у подоланні комунікативних і когнітивних вразливостей. У цій статті розглядаються теоретичні аспекти нарративного підходу до дослідження властивостей балансу сил, яку використовують країни ЦСЄ для самоідентифікації та переговорів щодо розподілу сил у регіоні. Використовуючи нарративний аналіз, у цій статті досліджується, як ці нарративи впливають на сприйняття балансу сил у регіоні та окреслюють мережові комунікаційні канали.

Ключові слова: нарративи, баланс сил, Центральна-Східна Європа, міжнародна комунікація, дискурс, мережові відносини, стійкість

Problem statement. The properties of the balance of power in the world and regions are changing. While in the modern era kinetic weapons were crucial and in the postmodern era - cognitive

ones, so in the matamodern period both are important. In particular, the media, along with the armed forces of countries, have become a key factor of influence in international relations, which requires new methodological and theoretical approaches to analysis.

The contemporary discourse of international relations is aimed at destroying existing and forming new interpretive and semantic mechanisms of perception of reality. The intensity of the war for cognitive and communication control, for power over consciousness and emotions, thinking and behavior is increasing [Parakhonsky, Yavorska, 2019].

After the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (hereinafter - CEE) once again found themselves at the intersection of international megatrends of global development, which include, in particular, qualitative and quantitative changes in the participants of international relations, transformation of the role of the state and strengthening of non-state actors, increasing interdependence, blurring of national borders and erosion of sovereignty, ideologization of international relations, and the growing role of network structures in world politics [Koppel, Parkhomchuk, 2021].

The complexity of international network structures is characterized by the growing role of transnational relations involving migrants, new diasporas, national minorities, NGOs, gender and religious communities, as well as the growing influence of extreme political movements - far-right and left-wing parties. It is also obvious that the ideological factor in the CEE region did not disappear after the end of the Cold War, but was transformed into one or another type of narrative - liberal, conservative, isolationist, nationalist, pro-Euro-Atlantic, anti-American, etc.

On the one hand, in Central and Eastern Europe, it is possible to see signs of "mosaic communication," which implies the relationship between united but closed, protected and competing political and media cultures under the influence of superpowers and international organizations. On the other hand, the objective resource insufficiency of each individual country necessitates resource optimization and decentralized reintegration: joint management of distributed historical experience, regulation of consensus on common meanings, design of inter-municipal, inter-party, inter-agency, inter-sectoral and other network interconnections.

In this intertwining of multi-level relations, it is important for CEE countries to find ways to maintain the balance of power in the region, to make claims about their identity and vision of the future. In the new metamodern environment, CEE countries are trying to find ways to influence international relations.

The purpose of the article is to substantiate the use of a narrative approach to studying the problems of the balance of power in the CEE region, as well as to consider narratives as tools for overcoming communication vulnerabilities and gaps in connectivity between transnational actors in the region and the CEE states.

Analysis of research and publications. After Russia's annexation of Crimea, the international scientific discourse has intensified research related to strategic communication in international relations, information security, international hybrid influences, discourse and language of war, framing in information policy, semiotics of interpretive mechanisms, and, ultimately, narrativism in international relations. Mostly based on an axiological methodology, the research examines the extent to which ideas, meanings, and ideologies influence global and regional fragmented environments, social groups, and communities.

First of all, the essence of the problem is outlined by developments in the field of megatrends in international relations and network theory. For example, the synergistic analysis of Manuel Castells and Van Dyke helps to formulate the key vulnerabilities of modern international communication - cognitive gaps in connectivity between actors at the global, regional and local levels [Livingston, 2010, Dijk, 2018].

The point is that network theory emphasizes the study of specific connectivity between certain nodes and components. At the same time, communication theory actively considers new international network formations through structural-functional and structural-activity methodology. In this sense, it is narrativistics that explores ways to overcome the gaps of connectivity. A group of authors, including Alister Miskimmon, Ben O'Loughlin, and Laura Roselle, made a significant contribution to the development of strategic communication, in particular in their works on the connection between international relations and narrativism [Alister Miskimmon, Ben O'Loughlin, Laura Roselle, 2017].

Strategic narratives, in their view, are the means by which political actors shape the shared meaning of international politics and shape the perceptions, beliefs, and behavior of domestic and international actors. These authors believe that communication studies in general, and the narrative approach in particular, significantly expand the understanding of contemporary international relations.

The traditions of communication studies provide new opportunities for understanding the behavior of multinational audiences and the changing information field, which provides an invaluable resource for international relations specialists. Communication researchers can use cognitive approaches to study meaningful interactions. For example, Ukrainian authors Borys Parakhonskyi and Halyna Yavorska in their work on meanings, narratives and framing during the war [Parakhonskyi, Yavorska, 2019] believe that, in fact, today, public discourse is a mirror, an embodiment and at the same time a mechanism for reproducing current ideas common to certain communities. Discourse is a mechanism for exchanging meanings and creating versions. Public discourse goes beyond the media - it is also non-public, diplomatic and informal communication. In addition, the means of hybrid influences are symbolic and signifying in nature. This applies to both military and non-military instruments. Public discourse creates an environment for the creation and replication of various versions and includes traditional media, social networks, public speeches, public events, diplomatic activity, etc.

Indeed, communication scholars can enrich the field of international relations studies (especially those that study international organizations, regional alliances, conflict resolution, and the balance of power) through their expertise in framing, semiotics (the science of signs and symbols), narratology, and discourse.

Research in this area points to the problems of modern "quick coalitions" where key participants often have opposing positions and are more like communities than traditional actors of international relations. The essence of communities a priori implies both symbolic and semantic boundaries of these groups, which is the basis for choosing communication methods to reach agreements, coalitions, and conventions. The complexity of the newest communication paradigm is related to the need to find areas of commonality within a diversified and fragmented communication environment. In particular, the place and role of communication in the process of creating new meanings in contemporary transnational and post-Soviet social relations deserves special attention. Political and communication technologies for building civil society in transitional democracies are undergoing significant acceleration under the influence of the global information and communication revolution, when the processes of political civil communication become transnational, and people's civic initiatives turn into a catalyst for intergovernmental and inter-societal dialogue in a globalized world [Danylenko, 2011].

The modern theoretical and methodological communication discourse clarifies the dialectic of splitting and integrity of any communication. The key hypothesis of our work is that polarization and fragmentation in societies and international relations are not an obstacle but a condition for the emergence of a "field of the common". Studies in this area point to the problems of modern "quick coalitions" where key participants often have opposing positions and are more like communities than traditional subjects of international relations. The complexity of the newest communication paradigm is related to the need to find areas of commonality within a diversified and fragmented communication environment.

Speaking of new knowledge in international relations through the study of narrativistics, we cannot ignore the latest phenomena and megatrends, such as transnational relations, the erosion of state sovereignty, and the growing influence of communication practices on international politics. The study by Olena Koppel and Olena Parkhomchuk on current global trends is noteworthy [Koppel, Parkhomchuk, 2021].

During 2020-2023, domestic organizations such as the Ukrainian Institute, BrandUkraine, Media Detector and others conducted a series of media and social media monitoring, which allows us to see vulnerabilities in communication between the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including in relation to Ukraine.

Polish authors traditionally pay a lot of attention to understanding the processes in Central and Eastern Europe, so it is worth noting that Lukasz Adamski described the painful history of the term "Central and Eastern Europe" [Adamski: 2021].

To understand the conceptual and theoretical foundations of the analysis of the narrative approach in international relations, fundamental developments in the field of communication studies, semiotics and framing by Charles Osgood, Charles Peirce, Gert Hofstede, Edward Hall, Umberto Eco, Algirdas Greimas, Ferdinand de Saussure, Jean Baudrillard and others remain relevant.

The main material. War is a determining factor in international relations. During a war, ideas, ideologies, histories, and narratives take on a practical dimension. Today, war, which can change the international security system, is both kinetic (conventional weapons) and cognitive (meanings and narratives). Moreover, the bloodiest clash is not a war until it is narrated and called a "war" [Parakhonsky, Yavorska, 2019].

According to researchers, modern warfare is a war "in the minds and for the minds". We can say that modern international relations are also a struggle for cognitive and communicative control, for power over consciousness and emotions, thinking and behavior.

In fact, today's war is not so much about information as about visions of the world, worldview concepts, myths about peoples and goods, sewn into complex communication strategies and tactics [Kuleba, 2022].

After the end of the bipolar system, the factor of ideologies adapted to the networked type of information storage and dissemination. Since the early 1990s, the constructivist paradigm seemed to have shown its viability, declaring interaction and interdependence as the basis of international relations, as well as narratives that embody the struggle for consciousness through ideas, ideologies, discourses, and beliefs. While realists and rationalists focus on studying the behavior of states and assessing their power potential, constructivists focus on communication and processes that occur at the moment of contact between representatives of states.

Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine has demonstrated the transition to metamodernity - the world is dangerously oscillating between realism and constructivism, although the media has been talking a lot about the irrationality of using weapons to resolve conflicts in the modern world in recent decades.

The war has changed the state of affairs in CEE. After February 2022, the region found itself under an existential threat from a formal superpower and at the center of potentially new geopolitical shifts. The membership of many countries in NATO and the EU has not relieved tensions and the desire to pay more attention to the balance of power in the region and their own security. Moreover, locked between Russia and Germany, the CEE countries have their own historical stereotypes, which have only been reinforced and revived by Russia's attack on Ukraine.

The very concept of the name CEE, on which there is a relative consensus in historical and political research circles, has a complicated history that reflects the way countries between the Baltic and Black Seas negotiated their self-definition and self-identification. For Ukraine, before and during the large-scale invasion, the CEE region was of great military, logistical, and humanitarian importance, but the persistent cognitive gaps in communication within the CEE and in relations with Ukraine appear to be a vulnerability that carries strategic risks.

Traditional networked transnational relations, historical intertwining, and being a geopolitical object of superpower policies for a long period of time are factors that require expanding the established methods of studying international relations among CEE countries with modern knowledge of communication studies. For example, existing network theories indicate that a cognitive network system is a set of nodes and links united by a particular problem, values, or narrative. Such a system is characterized by integrity, functionality, and expediency [Castells, 2009]. From this point of view, the CEE region has the characteristics of a network: in different periods of history, and especially after 1991, transnational horizontal relations in ideological, party, humanitarian, security, media, energy, transport, municipal, civil and other spheres have been actively developing here. At the same time, the signs of a system appear only when there is semantic coherence and interaction between actors.

From the point of view of Manuel Castells, a researcher of network structures, the space of information flows plays a central role in understanding the network society [Castells, 1996]. It is a

network of communication between certain nodes where subjects intersect. In contemporary social and international relations, the key property of a network is its substantive or narrative coherence. If narrative ties disappear or their intensity decreases between nodes, then the network dysfunction is observed.

On the one hand, the problem is that during Russia's war against Ukraine, clusters (nodes) are actively forming in the CEE region, but they often have unstable ties (political, border, agricultural, security, interethnic relations, etc.). On the other hand, the problem of identifying nodes, i.e., identifying network participants, has arisen again. Countries and nations can associate themselves with the EU, Western Europe, CEE, or no one, declaring their otherness, while being influenced by powerful actors such as the EU, NATO, the US, the UK, Germany, and Russia. The war leaves no guarantees or stable security forecasts for any CEE country and revives discussions about future ties within blocs, alliances, and international organizations.

In fact, along with the EU and NATO agenda, CEE countries continue to search for their own narrative, regional identity and cohesion, as evidenced by the emergence of new regional formal and informal associations that form network relations in one way or another. In our opinion, communicative interaction leads to the fact that actors, reaching agreement in the process of such interaction, simultaneously interact, as a result of which they create, confirm and renew their belonging to social groups, and at the same time their own individuality [Danylenko, 2011]. The key issue is to find ways to ensure the coherence of communication interaction.

The answer to this question can be understood through strategic narratives. There are three categories of strategic narratives. The international narrative system describes how the world is structured. For example, one can understand the relationship between the global liberal and anti-Western order, gender, religious and political ideologies, as well as the influence of international organizations. Identity narratives describe the histories of political actors, their values and goals, which makes it possible to understand the coherence and contradictions of, for example, right-wing and left-wing movements. Issue narratives respond to the demand for resolving a specific conflict using applied tools.

From the methodological and theoretical point of view, narrativistics can include the following key blocks: framing (basic optics, narrative focus), semiotics (symbols and signs that construct the narrative) and discourse (exchange of meaning within a certain framework, interpretive mechanisms). By purpose, there are the so-called "master narratives" (or strategic and dominant narratives) and "counter narratives" (or oppositional and opposing narratives). The common tasks of narratives are to legitimize any actions and create a negotiating field.

In fact, strategic narratives are the ordering of events and identities that politicians use to shape their goals by defining the past, present, and future. Narratives combine goals and interests, the goal and explain how to get there. From the point of view of Alistair Miskimmon, Ben O'Loughlin and Laura Rosel, strategic narratives are the means through which political actors shape the shared meaning of international politics and shape the perceptions, beliefs and behaviors of domestic and international actors. According to them, by tracking the formation, design, and perception of strategic narratives, we can explain how states plan to organize the world order, achieve political outcomes, strengthen policies, and increase legitimacy [Miskimmon, A., O'Loughlin, B., & Roselle, L., 2017]. Important features: on the one hand, a strategic narrative is always focused on future achievement of tasks (a kind of target model), on the other hand, it is a statement of identity with a certain retrospective. In addition, a strategic narrative can articulate a positioning (for example, regional or global) on any issue. The key thing about a narrative is that it is a story about events and phenomena that have an evaluative component, a moral of the story, or an interpretation of reality.

A narrative is information organized into a story (as a logically connected narrative, not a description of the past alone). From the point of view of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Dmytro Kuleba, stories are the main ammunition of war. They begin to be shaped and introduced into the cognitive space even before the war begins. History is the spark that is used to ignite the flame [Kuleba, 2022].

Obviously, narratives are a key cognitive element of modern international relations, international communication, and hybrid warfare. While information warfare affects the processes of information transmission, cognitive warfare affects the processes of thinking and decision-making

[Pocheptsov, 2019]. This is where interpretations and versions of events are born, which can be completely opposite. The world is moving to cognitive warfare, the strength of which is not in lies, fake news, or disinformation, but in supporting a polemic that is verified by objective facts [Pocheptsov, 2019].

According to Ukrainian researchers, cognitive warfare distorts public perceptions of the meaning of events, creates contradictory versions of what is happening, and, acting almost imperceptibly, the conflict of interpretations gains powerful (destructive) force. Hybrid conflicts have no borders and are not tied to borders because they are about the exchange of meanings and ideas [Yavorska, 2015].

The large-scale invasion in 2022 was preceded by years of information warfare. This discursive war was aimed at three types of audiences: some destructive discourses were spread within Ukraine, others were aimed at consumers in Russia, and still others were created for audiences in other countries, including CEE. In today's total information world, these discourses intersect, reinforce each other, and also compete with other discourses: democratic, liberal, human rights, minority rights, etc. Together, they pose internal and external threats to Ukraine's national security [Dziuba, 2023].

Thus, the narrative approach plays an important role in understanding the balance of power in a regional context such as Central and Eastern Europe. Below are some thematic or issue narratives that can be taken into account when examining the dominant identity narratives among CEE countries:

1. Historical narrative. Consideration of historical ties between the countries of the region and their impact on the current balance of power. Analyzing the historical circumstances that shaped regional dynamics and identifying the narratives that emerged as a result of these events.
2. Ethnic and cultural narratives. Study of ethnic and cultural narratives that influence relations between countries and the internal balance of power. Examination of different identities and their impact on political dynamics in the region.
3. Political narratives. Analysis of right, left and center political discourses and ideologies that shape the internal and external balance of power. Assessment of the role of international actors and their influence on the regional balance of power through political narratives.
4. Economic narratives. Analysis of economic stories and their impact on the socio-economic structure of the countries of the region. Consideration of the role of global economic changes in shaping the balance of power.
5. Media narratives. Assessment of how media narratives reflect and shape power relations in the region. Analyzing the role of the media in shaping public opinion and influencing political decisions.

This multifaceted approach allows for a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the CEE region's balance of power in the military, political, and economic spheres.

Obviously, the region's self-identification has been under consideration for a long time, including the spectrum of self-definition - Eastern Europe, Central Europe, or Central and Eastern Europe. Immediately after the collapse of the USSR and the Eastern bloc, Poland, as in the interwar period of the early twentieth century, became one of the key initiators of the search for new regional meanings in CEE. For example, the Intermarium and later the Three Seas projects are part of the CEE narrative discourse and reflect a certain range of hopes and fears in the region. Against the backdrop of Poland's historical and security narratives, for example, the Czech Republic has expressed concern about whether the Three Seas Initiative would harm relations with the EU in general and Germany in particular, while Slovakia has been under the discursive influence of pan-Slavism for a certain period and had its own vision of the future. To remove geopolitics from the agenda, the founding countries focused on energy, transportation, telecommunications, and other applied areas.

The "Eastern Partnership", which was also co-initiated by Poland, directly affects the perception of Ukraine's identity, which from the beginning was in the "basket" with Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Moldova, and Belarus. Formally, the partnership focused on the adaptation of legislation to the European one, trade, cross-border relations, regional cooperation, energy and cybersecurity.

At the same time, the EaP has repeatedly recorded cognitive gaps in coherence caused by potentially different perceptions of the partners' narratives, which could even lead to demarches by some participants. For a long time, the media showed relatively different interpretations of the processes. While Poland associated this project mainly with strengthening its eastern policy, a kind of soft power ("pulling" some post-Soviet countries out of the Russian orbit of influence), leadership in the EU in the eastern region of Europe, assistance in adapting the norms and legislation of the participants to European rules, etc., in the same time for Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, for example, this project was perceived, among other things, as a tool and lever for full accession to the EU. Belarus generally reduced its participation in the initiative and later declared its unwillingness to continue the dialogue. From the point of view of observers, the project sometimes demonstrated a clash of different identity narratives, semantic gaps, and different interpretations of a common future.

One way or another, the CEE countries officially declare that all integration projects, including the Visegrad Group, the Lublin Triangle, the Bucharest Nine, and others, should be seen as a complement to European and transatlantic structures, not as an alternative. At the same time, the United States, NATO, the United Kingdom, Germany, and the EU have their own interpretive mechanisms for processes in CEE, which traditionally complicates dialogue and common ground in the region. Under the pressure of Russian aggression, the processes of military and humanitarian cooperation in the region have accelerated, while the question of common meanings, vector and sustainability of these relations remains open.

Today, the war requires dozens of communication channels besides purely military ones - energy, transportation, agrarian, migration, medical, media, party, parliamentary, educational, and so on - which are supported by horizontal communication between regional neighbors. Moreover, all other relations, including military relations, depend on party communication during the pre-election period. Political rhetoric in the CEE countries, in turn, is often divided into extreme right and left trends, conservatives and liberals, isolationists and globalists. Each spectrum, in turn, relies on its own traditional interpretation of history, on the basis of which it develops the current agenda and outlines future steps in all types of activities. In this context, we are actually saying that a narrative, or a subjective story of causal events, has a significant impact on reality.

Thus, analyzing strategic narratives between CEE countries is a rather complex task that requires a deep study of the political context, historical relations, cultural characteristics, and current geopolitical trends. Here are some common examples of gaps in the perception of strategic narratives:

1. Relations of some CEE countries with Russia and Germany. The Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) and Poland are the most critical of Russia, especially after the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and support Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration. Hungary and Bulgaria may have a less critical view of Russia, due to economic and energy ties. Similarly, in Poland, unlike the Czech Republic, historical stereotypes have led to a critical perception and specific interpretation of Germany's eastern policy.

2. European integration and NATO enlargement. Poland and the Baltic states are the most active supporters of further EU and NATO enlargement to the east, including the accession of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. Hungary and the Czech Republic may express doubts about further enlargement, either because of their own domestic political issues or because of their attitudes toward EU migration policy.

3. Migration crisis. There is a certain gap in perception between Western and Central and Eastern EU countries regarding the open door policy and the distribution of refugees.

4. Geopolitical orientation of CEE. Countries that actively support transatlantic ties (e.g., Poland and the Baltic states) may have a gap in the perception of strategic narratives with countries that demonstrate a more restrained or openly pro-Russian stance.

Certain gaps in the perception of reality are recorded in the discourse around Ukraine - after and before the start of Russian aggression in February 2022. According to a study conducted by the NGO BrandUkraine in the first year of the war, in Central and Eastern Europe, the majority of the population in mid-2022 recognized that by fighting against the Russian invasion, Ukraine was also fighting for democracy in Europe. However, there is a significant gap in the perception of this narrative. The message of the Ukrainian authorities that "Ukraine is fighting for Europe" was positively supported in Poland by 83%, Lithuania by 82%, and the Czech Republic by 81%, which is

2 times higher than in some other countries in the region: Romania 42%, Hungary 44%, Bulgaria 46% [BrandUkraine: 2022].

Since narratives do not emerge out of the blue and always have historical reasons and social consensus, it is worth looking at the perception of Ukraine in the prewar period. A study conducted by the Ukrainian Institute shows that for Poles, Ukraine was mostly correlated with historical events [Ukrainian Institute: 2022].

Socio-political and economic processes until 2022 were associated in Poland with negative connotations - "annexation of Crimea," "war in the East," "uncertainty," etc. In other words, it could be interpreted that the war was a problem, and Ukraine was part of the problem, not part of the solution. In fact, it is important to understand this today, when Ukraine is analyzing the involvement of CEE countries in various kinds of assistance.

More attention in Poland was paid to countering Russia's military aggression, so Ukraine could probably be perceived as a "fortress" or "buffer."

In general, according to the study, Polish society did not have a well-formed attitude toward its neighbor.

Prior to February 2022, the priority countries for Poles were those with whom they believed there was a "commonality of views" - the Visegrad countries of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, so and the Baltic states.

According to the same study, Hungarians' general perceptions of Ukraine are superficial: beautiful cities, churches, Kyiv, Uzhhorod, Berehove. The attitude of ordinary Hungarians is neutral, in fact, a "clean slate."

In the absence of other points of interaction, the main source of narratives about Ukraine in Hungary was the media, which emphasized the "oppression" of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine, the "language issue," and so on.

The cohort of countries of professional interest in Hungary included neighboring countries with a Hungarian diaspora, as well as countries with which economic and cultural ties have been established - the Visegrad Group, as well as Austria, the United States, Russia, and Germany [Ukrainian Institute: 2022].

Conclusions. Thus, the application of a narrative approach to the study of the problems of the balance of power in the CEE region, as well as the consideration of narratives as tools to overcome communication vulnerabilities and disconnections between transnational actors in the region and the CEE states, is substantiated. The authors provide a theoretical description of the narrative approach methodology for a more comprehensive understanding of the properties of the balance of power in the CEE region and the dynamics of relations with superpowers.

It is stated that narrativism is an effective tool of modern international relations in the information and cognitive part. The properties of the balance of power in the CEE region is determined by historical circumstances, geopolitical interests of superpowers, and strategic communication of international organizations and transnational actors. Narratives are managed on an interdisciplinary level, involving diplomats, international communication specialists, linguists, historians, and psychologists. Rapid connectivity in the CEE region requires a policy of shared meanings and non-standard communication approaches to create an effective negotiation field.

The narratives of CEE countries often repeat historical fears and the constant desire for a balanced matrix of relations. Societies try to create narratives that strengthen their geopolitical position, often reflecting the complex interplay of historical alliances, contemporary geopolitical interests, and perceived future trajectories.

At the same time, the international community's perception of Central and Eastern Europe is often shaped by the strategic narratives promulgated by the countries of the region. These narratives, in turn, trigger a series of international reactions that either reinforce or challenge existing structures of relations. Examining specific examples, such as narratives on NATO involvement, EU integration, and bilateral relations among CEE countries, can shed light on how narratives are shaped and evolve.

The role of media and social media in disseminating and reinforcing these narratives cannot be underestimated. They play a crucial role in international communication, often becoming the conduits through which narratives are disseminated and challenged.

For Ukraine, it is crucial to master the mechanisms of issue communication, which involves inter-industry, inter-sectoral and inter-professional communication with CEE using subject or problematic narratives.

Thus, it is important to have a methodological and theoretical understanding of the methods of analyzing the nuances of power dynamics in Central and Eastern Europe. This suggests that the narrative-centered approach provides a subtle understanding of the region's international communication channels and the constantly changing properties of the balance of power in the military, political, and economic spheres.

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