

CONTENTIOUS CONCEPTS

Despite its short history as an independent country, Ukraine experienced several tumultuous political events even before the full-scale invasion by Russia in February 2022. Three of these are linked to protests initiated on Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) in Kyiv, and in popular discourse they are often called revolutions. The first of these, the Revolution on Granite, was a student protest that occurred in October 1990, the year before Ukraine became an independent nation-state following the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991. The name referred to the students' raising of tents on the granite steps leading to the square's Lenin monument. The peaceful protest resulted in the government's acceptance of the protesters' demands. This was followed shortly by the breakup of the Soviet Union and Ukraine's independence as a sovereign nation-state (Yekechyk 2015, 1–2). A national referendum took place 1 December 1991, and an overwhelming majority supported the Act of Declaration of Independence—of the 82 percent of the electorate that participated, more than 90 percent voted in favor of the act (Magocsi 2010, 724ff.). While it remained careful in its relations with Russia, the government of Leonid Kuchma took a few steps toward building a Ukrainian national identity, such as issuing decrees of “decommunization” of the Soviet past (Oliinyk and Kuzio 2021, 808).

The Orange Revolution, named for the campaign color of the political opposition, started with large protests in 2004 against a rigged election and, more generally, against corruption in the government. The discovery that Viktor Yanukovich had manipulated election results in his favor in November 2004 led to massive protests. These protests were successful, and a new and fair election was held, resulting in victory for the opposition candidate, Viktor Yushenko, and his prime minister, Yulia Tymoshenko. The Yushenko government went further in distancing Ukraine from Russia and building a Ukrainian national history. A particular focus was Holodomor, the Great Famine of 1932–1933, caused by Joseph Stalin's

decision to curb the farmers' resistance to his agricultural policy (Applebaum 2017; Reid 1997). A Holodomor museum was built, and the Institute of National Remembrance was launched (Kasianov 2022; Oliinyk and Kuzio 2021, 808).

However, Yuschenko became increasingly unpopular, and in 2010 he lost the election to his predecessor and former rival, Yanukovich, who regained power. Yanukovich's main opponent, Yulia Tymoshenko, had received almost as many votes as he did, and the following year Tymoshenko was arrested and jailed. This jailing of an opposition politician overshadowed much of the discourse about Ukraine for the years 2011–2013 and contributed to the country's image as corrupt, undemocratic, and unable to move forward (see Ståhlberg and Bolin 2016).

The third so-called revolution occurred when, contrary to expectations, President Yanukovich did not sign the association agreement with the European Union in November 2013. He was subsequently ousted and fled to Russia. In Ukraine these violent events are called the Revolution of Dignity, but in the rest of the world they are more commonly known as the Euromaidan Revolution.

Revolution is, of course, a very strong word for conceptualizing a political event. Although it had a prominent place in early twentieth-century political discourse, the term *revolution* was used rather sparsely in national histories, reserved only for radically restructuring events that entirely transformed societies and were loaded with visualizations, myths, and iconography. Revolution is thus about *parametric* changes on a systemic level, where the constitutive parts of the system are reorganized. Changes within the framework of an existing system can thus be described as *nonparametric*, where some features of a system (e.g., a state) are reformed but the system itself remains intact (Braman 2006, 260ff.). The most famous revolutions of the parametric kind are no doubt the French Revolution of 1789 and the Russian Revolution of 1917. However, many nation-states around the world historicize their birth in terms of revolutions (e.g., the American Revolution of 1776). It may be significant that Ukraine has been described as having had three revolutions in the last three decades. So how are we to understand these events today, and what significance do they have domestically as well as internationally?

The Orange Revolution may be the most internationally well known of these three events, and perhaps it should first be understood in a global context rather than in relation to other Ukrainian events. For some years

around the turn of the millennium, revolutions named after colors and flowers occurred in many places, not least in the former Soviet states. Thus, the Orange Revolution is often remembered together with the Rose Revolution in Georgia and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, perhaps recalling the earlier Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia and the even earlier Carnation Revolution in Portugal or related to the later Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia. These names might have divergent backgrounds, but they were enthusiastically adopted and popularized by the international media, and they are often markers for domestic celebrations. Their names suggest that these were good revolutions, usually described as peaceful and nonviolent protests against totalitarian regimes.¹ This attention from the global mass media has framed these upheavals within a common narrative structure that not only represents the events but also affects the events themselves.

These colorful political events also contributed to a reinterpretation of the concept of revolution, which, to say the least, had not been unanimously embraced in the capitalist world. In a sense, the concept was appropriated by liberal ideology and used in discursive combat with regimes in countries with histories of anticapitalist revolutions. Thus, the leadership in Russia was not fond of the color revolutions, especially those taking place in the immediate vicinity of Russia, such as the Orange Revolution in Ukraine (Finkel and Brudny 2012b). In this case, however, it was not merely a struggle over words. The Orange Revolution in 2004 was directed against a Russia-backed regime that was replaced with a more Western-friendly one.

At the time of the Euromaidan upheaval, it was not far-fetched to relate it to the Orange Revolution of a decade earlier. First, the political issue was almost the same: popular discontent with a corrupt regime backed by Russia. Second, several of the same political actors reappeared in this drama: Yanukovich, the politician accused of fraud during the Orange Revolution, was back in power as president, and many of the individuals now demanding his resignation had been active in the previous revolt. Third, although it happened within a less optimistic conjuncture of global processes, it made sense to symbolically link the Euromaidan Revolution with an era that had positive connotations in world politics. Relabeling it the Revolution of Dignity and associating it with both the colorful revolts (Orange Revolution) and protests against the Soviet regime (Revolution on Granite) emphasized that this was a legitimate uprising against an unjust regime, but with a sharp edge toward Russia.

For a while at least, the events occurring at Maidan Nezalezhnosti in Kyiv in 2013–2014 resembled revolutionary scenarios from earlier times: dramatic TV footage and press photos communicated to international audiences, showing barricades, burning piles of tires, violence, blood, and death. As if the images did not speak for themselves, foreign correspondent Elin Jönsson, reporting from Kyiv for Swedish television, anchored their meaning by exclaiming, “It looks like a revolution” (Sveriges Television 2013).

The visual comparison to the revolt of a decade earlier was striking. Images from the Orange Revolution showed peaceful demonstrations in sunny daylight. Protesters were smiling, and the color orange was everywhere—on flags, banners, scarves, caps, and balloons. Ten years later, the images were dark, often shot at night. They showed angry or threatened protesters fighting with the police, surrounded by clouds of black smoke. Now the flags and banners were blue and yellow (the colors of Ukraine’s national flag) and black and red (in this context, symbolizing right-wing nationalism, not anarchism), and of course, there was the flag of the European Union with its twelve yellow stars against a clear blue background.

Several months later, when the revolt was over and the regime had changed, remnants of the violent clashes between the protesters and the police were still left on the Maidan and neighboring roads. We returned to Kyiv in June 2014 and strolled among the burnt-out vehicles and debris from the barricades. Military tents had been raised, and remaining revolutionaries in tattered uniforms were watching over the space (figure 1.1). Along the streets, entrepreneurial citizens were trading revolution-inspired merchandise, including toilet paper and doormats printed with the faces of Vladimir Putin and Yanukovych. The site looked like an open-air theme park of a violent revolution—although memorials with pictures of fallen heroes reminded visitors that this had been real. Later, the people killed during the fights were honored as the “Heavenly Hundred.”

Importantly, the impression of the Euromaidan Revolution as dark and violent is not the complete picture. Instead, it may be an image that, with time, has become a mediated memory. As several scholars have concluded, the events that took place in central Kyiv were very fragmented; just a few streets away from the battle, peaceful activities occurred simultaneously. Furthermore, the three months of protests passed through several phases with different atmospheres (Stepnisky 2020). Thus, the dark and violent images belong largely to the second phase, from mid-January to mid-February.



Figure 1.1
Maidan Nezalezhnosti, 2 June 2014.
Photo by authors.

Before that, the Maidan protests seemed rather peaceful. At the outset, Maidan had all the trappings of a peaceful occupation. It drew on familiar repertoires from the peaceful Orange Revolution and other nonviolent protests: tents, political speeches, marchers with flags and decorated posters, musical performances, humorous and satirical graffiti, and nonviolent defiance of the police (Stepnisky 2020, 86).

But the question of how to conceptualize the three Ukrainian upheavals remains. In media and communication studies of the early twentieth century, revolutions (as well as world wars) have often been understood from the perspective of information management and related, in particular, to the concept of propaganda. Revolutionaries such as Lenin, Stalin, and Mao have been regarded as skillful communicators of their eras, and revolutionary posters, artworks, slogans, and films have become standard examples of propaganda aesthetics and rhetoric (Kenez 1985). Just like the word *revolution*, *propaganda* became a key term characterizing the world's predicament during much of the twentieth century. "This is the age of propaganda" is

the opening phrase in a classic study of protests in the US during the Great Depression, and its title combines the two key concepts: *World Revolutionary Propaganda: A Chicago Study* (Lasswell and Blumenstock 1939).

In this respect, something changed with the new millennium or perhaps earlier, with the end of the Cold War. As Colin Sparks (1998) notes in his account of changes occurring after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, revolution had become a metaphor applied to dramatic developments in several domains, such as the information revolution, and its adjective form was used in marketing campaigns. Sparks helpfully distinguishes four ways to regard the revolutionary events taking place in eastern Europe around 1989: “total transformation,” indicating social as well as political change; “social (counter)revolution,” indicating social but not political change; “political revolution,” indicating political but not social change; and “what revolution?” indicating neither political nor social change (1998, 78ff.). After a thorough analysis of the mass media and their organizational structures and staffing, the legal system surrounding the mass media, and the role of civil society at the time, Sparks concludes that, at least in the four Visegrad countries (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Slovakia) at the center of his analysis, there is strong support for the political revolution perspective; that is, despite the changes made in the political and economic systems, the “oppressive and exploitative social relations that were characteristic of the older order” were not fundamentally altered. The mass media constitute a case in point: organizationally, they changed from state television and a state-controlled press into public service broadcasting companies and a liberal press, but they were run by the same *nomenklatura* as during communist times (Sparks 1998, 188).

Propaganda as a concept occurs several times in Sparks’s account, but it is referred to only in relation to the communist pasts of the analyzed countries. The same is true of the color revolutions around the world, which are rarely analyzed from the perspective of propaganda—and when they are, it is always the threatened authoritarian regime that is propagandist, not the revolutionaries. This was the situation in Ukraine during and after the Euro-aidan Revolution: communication from the new regime would not be termed propaganda, but communication from its critics would be. Thus, the two key concepts from the twentieth century remain in the vocabulary of the twenty-first century, but they have shifted location and, perhaps, meaning. Furthermore, they are hardly the dominant concepts for characterizing the

present. Many other words are competing for that status. Instead of a *revolution* in Ukraine some might discuss this in terms of *conflict* or *crisis*; the terms *disinformation*, *fake news*, and *information war* are competing with the concept of *propaganda*.

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS . . .

The words *revolution* and *propaganda* have thus been unstable, controversial, and challenged terms for a long time. Propaganda has been studied since the early days of mass communication research (Lippmann [1922] 1946; Lasswell [1927] 1971; Bernays [1928] 2005). In their remarkably nuanced treatise of world revolutionary propaganda in the 1930s, Harold Lasswell and Dorothy Blumenstock explain that there is only a slight difference between propaganda and what is usually regarded as its antonym: “Propaganda is the manipulation of symbols to control controversial attitudes; education is the manipulation of symbols (and of other means) to transmit accepted attitudes (and skills)” (1939, 10). Their point is that what is propaganda in one context is education in another. For example, the advocacy of communism is propaganda in America but education in the Soviet Union, while the propagation of individualism is propaganda in the Soviet Union but education in America.

Several decades later, at the height of the Cold War, Jacques Ellul reflected on another challenge related to the phenomenon of propaganda. On the one hand, “propaganda is usually regarded as an evil [but to] study anything properly one must put aside ethical judgements”; on the other hand, propaganda becomes a completely useless concept if it includes any effort to communicate ideas with the intention of influencing people’s attitudes, because then “everything is propaganda” (Ellul 1965, x–xi). This insight from the twentieth century is useful when studying policy and meaning management in the present; the fight over words has hardly decreased.

But why do people fight over words? Why is it important to quarrel over whether something should be called propaganda or education? The reason is that words have power. Words have the performative power to do things, as John Austin ([1955] 1975) famously theorized. In a general sense, then, words are the tools of symbolic power, as elaborated by Pierre Bourdieu (1991) in his *Language and Symbolic Power*. They are the stakes in the game, and the discursive battles and negotiations are the objects of analysis. The

battle over words is a battle over who can define situations, who can describe the order of a specific society. The power to define situations is no small matter. How people frame their social interaction by way of a common definition of the situation has profound consequences for how they act in society, as famously captured in the Thomas theorem: “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Thomas and Thomas 1928; cf. Merton 1995).²

The powers discussed by Austin, Bourdieu, and William and Dorothy Thomas could all fit under the umbrella of symbolic power. Sandra Braman calls this the type of power that shapes human behavior “by manipulating the material, social, and symbolic worlds via ideas, words, and images.” However, Braman adds a more profound dimension of power—namely, “informational power,” which she defines as the ability to manipulate other forms of power (i.e., instrumental, structural, and symbolic power) and thus effect paradigmatic change on a systems level (2006, 25ff.). Our analysis takes place largely on the level of symbolic power, but we return to the question of informational power in the final chapter.

The analyst of culture and society should be sensitive to the words he or she uses for analysis and should avoid falling into the discursive trap of using the jargon of the object of analysis. Revolution, propaganda, nation branding, and soft power are all concepts used in games of power to describe things and relations in certain terms rather than others. They can be used to elevate one’s own position, gain advantages, and privilege one’s place on the field of competition. Conversely, they can be used to undermine the position of one’s adversaries. For the analyst, this has profound consequences, and like Bourdieu, one should seek at all costs to avoid the “received ideas and spontaneous sociology” that restrict the analysis and cause it to be performed in the language of the object of analysis itself ([2012] 2020, 3). Bourdieu makes this point several times in his work and in interviews (see, e.g., Bourdieu 1990), and he holds that the social sciences (especially sociology) present a special difficulty because many of the concepts are used in everyday parlance. One could argue that this is an even bigger problem in the field of media and communication: everybody has experiences with media, so everybody has opinions about how the media work and how they should be valued. The high degree of connectivity between analytical approaches and media practices means that practical concepts from the field of media enter into analytical language. Many of the concepts examined in this book are of that nature.

The meanings of words, however, are not stable over time. Fighting over words can lead to change, as words acquire new meanings or meanings change due to public use. This is evident in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, where one can read about the etymological history of words, when they first appeared in the English language, and when their meanings were altered. Raymond Williams, for example, famously devoted a whole book to following the trajectory of the word *culture* over nearly two hundred years, tracing its meanings among eighteenth-century writers and politicians such as Edmund Burke, nineteenth-century philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham or critics such as Matthew Arnold, and twentieth-century novelists and poets such as D. H. Lawrence, T. S. Eliot, and George Orwell. The introduction to this important text is worth quoting at length:

In the last decade of the eighteenth century, and in the first half of the nineteenth century, a number of words, which are now of capital importance, came for the first time into common use, or, where they had already been generally used in the language, acquired new meanings. There is in fact a general pattern of change in these words, and this can be used as a special kind of map by which it is possible to look again at those wider changes in life and thought to which changes in language evidently refer. (Williams [1958] 1963, 13)

The words Williams has in mind are those whose meaning changed due to industrialization: *industry*, *democracy*, *class*, *art*, and *culture*. His point is that words change with society and are, in fact, a part of society. Words reflect how citizens think about society and how they think of themselves as part of society.

In line with Williams's analysis, a brief examination of the trajectory of *propaganda* as a concept is worthwhile. *Propaganda* was not always a negative word, and especially not in the part of the world where Ukraine is located. The word itself can be traced back to Cicero in the first century BC (Cull 2019, 172n17). As a systematic way of disseminating ideas, it was developed in 1539 by Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuit order, for "the defence and propagation of the faith" (quoted in Cull 2019, 9), thus bringing the concept of *propaganda fide* into the language of the church. It was gradually institutionalized "to coordinate missionary activity" (10), and in 1622 Pope Gregory XV founded the *Congregatio de propaganda fide*, consisting of a committee of cardinals responsible for foreign missions—that is, a committee for the propagation of the true faith. However, with the rise of mass media and fears related to mass society, *propaganda* acquired less

positive connotations, and since then, its dominant meaning has been negative (Jowett and O'Donnell 1992, 82ff.).

In addition to words having different meanings at different points in time, there are regional variations to consider. In the revolutionary Soviet Union, for example, the word *propaganda* had positive connotations, and propaganda was used systematically to spread the socialist ideology to remote parts of the country. Propaganda as a concept was most often accompanied by the concept of agitation, and in the writings of Lenin and others, the two words were often used synonymously. However, Marxist thinker Georgi Plekhanov sought to distinguish them:

Agitation is also propaganda, but propaganda that takes place in particular circumstances, that is in circumstances in which even those who would not normally pay any attention are forced to listen to the propagandist's words. Propaganda is agitation that is conducted in the normal everyday course of the life of a particular country. Agitation is propaganda occasioned by events that are not entirely ordinary and that provoke a certain upsurge in the public mood. ([1891] 1983, 103)

Plekhanov's distinction seems to be based on propaganda being active in the "formation of people's minds" (to use the words of Ellul [1965]), whereas agitation supports the formation of people's actions. Propaganda, then, is the theory, while agitation is the goal-oriented practice (cf. Kremer and Martov [1896] 1983, 203).

The two concepts merged in the practice of agitprop—agitation propaganda. The main instrument for agitprop was the cinema, and montage was the specific technique adopted by young filmmakers. Film, Lenin had argued, was the most important of the arts, but raw film was scarce, so enthusiastic young filmmakers had to make use of whatever was available. Clips from old films, shot for a variety of purposes, were then used in recombination to achieve new meanings. When juxtaposed, these clips could be combined in ways that produced new meanings. The goal was to produce an effect that redirected the audience's mind in the desired direction. Filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein became the main theorist of the montage, having developed it in *Strike* (1924), *October* (1927), and the pathbreaking *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) (Furhammar and Isaksson 1968, 16ff.). The massacre on the stairs in Odesa (located in contemporary Ukraine) is probably one of the most famous scenes in film history and is significant for Eisenstein's montage style, which he later theorized in his collection of essays *Film Form* ([1949] 1977).

Agitprop was thus a technology used to “provoke a certain upsurge,” as Plekhanov phrased it, and spread the revolution around Russia’s vast territory. Agitprop trains toured the countryside showing films to the (sometimes illiterate) masses. This was one art form in which famous directors such as Dziga Vertov and Aleksandr Medvedkin were deeply engaged (Heftberger 2015). However, agitprop also took the form of theater and poetry and was not confined to Soviet Russia; it was present in other parts of Europe, such as Weimar Germany. Many small theater companies assembled under the Arbeiter-Theater-Bund Deutschlands, which was affiliated with the Communist Party. The link to film was always close, however, and authors such as Bertolt Brecht transgressed the border between the two art forms.³ It could be said that the art form itself, with its montage techniques and specific forms of agitation, paved the way for more recent forms of discursive strategical action and laid the foundation of Russian communicative practice. This art form is addressed in more detail in later chapters, but for now, it is enough to say that education and propaganda also have their cultural anchors and textual traditions.

US political scientist Harold Lasswell defined propaganda as “the management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols” in his analysis of propaganda during World War I (1927, 627). More drastically, and perhaps because he was focusing on wartime propaganda, he thought of this as “the war of ideas on ideas” (Lasswell [1927] 1971, 12). His analysis is broad and includes various tropes and media forms in wartime propaganda, ranging from broadcasts to literature. And although there are examples of propaganda dating back to the Reformation and the invention of the printing press, with the industrialized warfare of World War I, propaganda became more important both internally, directed toward the domestic audience, and externally, directed toward the enemy. Governments needed to encourage military recruitment, ensure political support for the war among the citizenry, and mobilize public opinion to accept the moral righteousness of warfare (Vuorinen 2012). Conversely, propaganda was targeted toward the enemy with the aim to demoralize, destabilize public support, and sow seeds of doubt among the enemy’s population. However, the foreign audience is not necessarily confined to the conflict region, such as when one party in a conflict feels the need to raise support or influence international public opinion (Schleifer 2012).

So, in the thinking of Lasswell and others, the phenomenon of propaganda deals with the intentional manipulation of meaning to direct attention, stir

emotion, and produce hatred, adoration, or loyalty. As we have seen, however, the concept of propaganda is both descriptive and *constative*, in Austin's ([1955] 1975) meaning: a word used to establish something factual. But it also has performative power; it does something. For example, it blames the propagandist for twisting reality, for manipulating people into perceiving situations one way rather than another. As such, the word *propaganda* is part of propaganda practice.

Propaganda is thus mostly thought of as a descriptive word, but it is also involved in how social and political realities are presented. The same can be said of the word *revolution*. In his famous book *Keywords*, Williams observes an extension of its meaning and to what it is applied:

Revolution and revolutionary and revolutionize have of course also come to be used, outside political contexts, to indicate fundamental changes, or fundamentally new developments, in a very wide range of activities. It can seem curious to read of "a revolution in shopping habits" or of the "revolution in transport," and of course there are cases when this is simply the language of publicity, to describe some "dynamic" new product. (1976, 273–274)

One could say that words are sometimes appropriated and recontextualized, not least into commercial contexts. As Williams notes, this had already happened with *revolution* in the early 1970s. Several decades later, when we encounter the word in a political context again, we should bear in mind that revolutions have passed through the world of commerce and acquired new connotations (while losing some older ones). The Revolution of Granite, the Orange Revolution, and the Revolution of Dignity are not simply the names of three moments in Ukraine's contemporary politics. These Ukrainian upheavals are labeled and interconnected with the subtlety of promotional skills familiar from the commercial world of advertising, branding, and public relations (PR). The names no longer connote only violence or tumult; they also have significations of attraction, youthfulness, and desire. It appears as if the revolution has been branded.

Two years after the Euromaidan revolt, the debris on Independence Square in Kyiv had long since been cleared. Although the country was still subjected to violent pressure from its powerful neighbor in the east, everyday life in the city seemed surprisingly normalized, though interspersed with details reminiscent of the tumultuous events. Permanent memorials to the "Heavenly Hundred" who died during the upheaval stood where

the battles had been most intense, and government billboards along the main streets called attention to the ongoing war. In the busy underground shopping mall below the now famous square, an upscale restaurant had opened. The theme of the restaurant, called Ostannya Barykada (Last Barricade), was “three revolutions.” Showcased on the walls were photos, news clippings, and various objects related to the three Ukrainian revolutions, including a printout of the Facebook posting that allegedly instigated the latest revolution (figure 1.2).

The restaurant took pride in serving 100 percent Ukrainian food and drinks, but the menu, handed to us by a waitress in traditional Ukrainian folk dress, also contained a proclamation. With sophistication, the text intertwined this commercial eatery with a story of majestic politics. It is worth citing the proclamation in full (including grammatical errors):

The today’s Ostannya Barikada is an art and gastronomic space, a place for free thinking people and representatives of the new generation which were born by three modern Ukrainian revolutions: Student Revolution on Granite in 1990, Orange Revolution in 2004 and the Revolution of Dignity in 2014.

Ostannya Barykada is a platform for creating social and art projects, brainstorming, as well as for the inventing and implementing of the essential ideas.

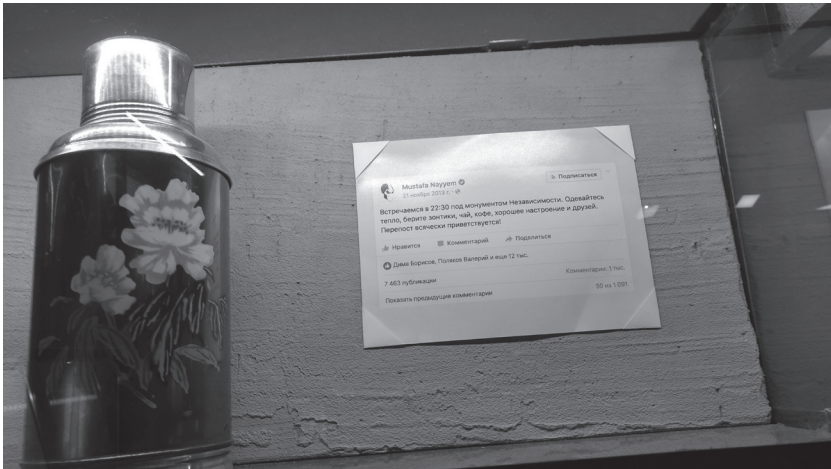


Figure 1.2
Mustafa Nayem’s Facebook posting, which allegedly instigated the last revolution, photocopied at the restaurant Ostannya Barykada, 18 October 2016.
Photo by authors

This is our fortress, a frontline where society is able to discuss long-term strategies of the country policy and work on the mistakes.

All three Ukrainian Maidan Revolutions showed the people's fascinating self-organization. We want to preserve that spirit of sympathy, altruism, social alertness and uprising which helped to create Ukrainian Revolutions of the last three decades.

The famous French philosopher Bernard-Henri Levy once said from the Maidan stage of 2014: "the heart of Europe beats in Kyiv." Only we being united can flush back the meaning and sense to such European values as freedom, democracy and tolerance.

On our bill is Taras Shevchencho's poem Zapovit and the slogan of all revolutions itself:

BORITESYA—POBORETE [STRUGGLE—YOU
SHALL OVERCOME]

The name Ostannya Barykada also carries connotations of an artistic movement with the same name, founded in the early 2000s, that has promoted Ukrainian culture, organized festivals and art exhibitions, and even produced a TV show. It also released a series of four CDs with songs by Ukrainian bands and musicians. The fourth—*Music Hundred*—was dedicated to the Euromaidan events. Notably, the movement's chairman, Oles Doniy, was one of the active organizers of the Revolution on Granite.

We return to this form of meaning-making later in this chapter, but to understand the changed semiotic meaning of revolution and the labeling of the upheavals in Ukraine, we need to expand the discussion and examine some other central concepts related to information policy in the contemporary world.

THE POWER OF REPRESENTATION

As we have shown, the concept of propaganda has been largely abandoned, mainly due to the negative connotations related to deceptive and false information and the manipulation of audiences. Few countries in the world now aspire to be "propaganda states."⁴ Still, in a global world of alliances and trade agreements, governments want the rest of the world to have a favorable image of their countries, and they develop information policies to produce this image. Arguably, late modern globalization has fueled the need to navigate in relation to the countries with which one trades or wants to trade and the countries one might want to have as allies. Thus, during the last decades

of the twentieth century, governments of nation-states started to worry about their reputation. These worries did not come from nowhere; they originated from lobbying activities within the fields of marketing and PR. Other concepts related to a government's promotion of a certain image of its nation-state have come into vogue, replacing propaganda.

In the second half of the twentieth century, *public diplomacy* was launched as an alternative, less negatively burdened concept to describe a practice that had in fact been around since World War II, carried out, for example, by the United States Information Agency (USIA). Public diplomacy should thus be understood as a “democratic equivalent to the word ‘propaganda’” (Cull 2019, 12) or, in the words of James Pamment, as “diplomatic advertising” (2013, 2). Public diplomacy is generally presented as an attractive activity and is often juxtaposed to propaganda; indeed, Edmund Guillon, the US diplomat who coined the term, would “have liked to call it ‘propaganda,’” but he realized the word’s negative connotations made that difficult (Cull 2019, 12). Consequently, public diplomacy is often described as “based on truth,” whereas “propaganda selects truth”; public diplomacy is “often two-way” and “tends to be respectful,” whereas “propaganda is seldom two-way” and “assumes that others are ignorant or wrong” (Cull 2019, 13). Public diplomacy research is a scholarly field that has grown out of diplomatic practice (Pike 2021, 7) and therefore often has an administrative slant (Lazarsfeld 1941), in the sense that it asks questions posed from within the practice itself, often with the aim of refining techniques or contributing to the development of diplomatic practice. However, the administrative-critical dimension is seldom either-or; rather, it consists of points along a continuum. The degree to which scholars are either responding to practical problems within public diplomacy (e.g., Entman 2008; Melissen 2005) or taking a more analytically critical stand (e.g., Pamment 2013; Surowiec 2016) is an open empirical question.

If public diplomacy is an activity and a practice, the resource it manages is *soft power*, a concept developed by political scientist Joseph Nye (2004) to define a country’s ability to affect others with attraction and persuasion. In the United States, soft power rests on the soft resources of American culture, values, and morals. Despite its undertone of cultural imperialism, soft power is usually understood as a sympathetic, even pleasant form of power, and state authorities around the world have happily appropriated the concept (Hannerz 2016, 193–207). Nye himself expressed surprise when Chinese president Hu Jintao “told the Chinese Communist Party’s 17th Party

Congress in 2007 that his country needed to increase its soft power” (Nye 2014, 20).⁵ However, appropriation of an analytical concept into political practice blurs its meaning and reduces its analytical power to its descriptive dimensions, since all forms of its use will be interpreted within the framework of the political field of social action.

Nye (2008) followed up on his ideas about soft power by relating this specific type of power to the practice of public diplomacy. A country’s soft power rests, according to Nye, on three pillars: its culture, its political values, and its foreign policies. The means by which a country can impact these three parameters is public diplomacy. Nye points to new communication technologies as contributing to the rise of public diplomacy. Initially, this meant radio that could broadcast to foreign audiences. Since then, the repertoire of available media has increased manifold, and social media in particular have become a means of acquiring international influence. Arguably, the presence of new media also changes the practices of soft power, producing hybrid forms that combine desire and fear (Surowiec 2017).

Public diplomacy and soft power rest on a political logic of power by attraction and the ability to dominate, or at least influence, other countries. It is a logic of international relations. The related phenomenon of *nation branding* can be described as a more campaign-oriented practice whereby governments, PR consultants, media organizations, and corporate businesses join forces to develop information policy through the promotion of a favorable image of a particular nation-state (Bolin and Ståhlberg 2010, 79). Nation branding as a concept and a phenomenon appeared in the early 1990s, advocated by entrepreneurial scholars at business schools in the UK and US who were also engaged in selling their consultancy services to governments (Aronczyk 2013). Consultant-scholars such as Wally Olins (2002), Keith Dinnie (2008), and Simon Anholt (2005, 2007) have, on the one hand, constructed assessment systems to measure the image value of nation-states on the international market and, on the other hand, used these systems to convince their customers—governments in different parts of the world—of the need to launch branding campaigns to put their specific countries “on the map.”

Early examples of this specific practice include Brand Estonia, the campaign initiated by the Estonian government in 2001. At the time, Estonia had just won the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC), and according to tradition, it would host the event the following year. Estonia was the first post-Soviet country to win the hugely popular contest. Having regained its

independence after the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, the small country of 1.3 million inhabitants was trying to transform its economy through what President Mart Laar (1996) described as economic “shock therapy”—a combination of austerity and neoliberal economic policy. In this process, the ESC victory was extremely timely and offered a window of opportunity, as the rest of Europe would be focused on Estonia’s capital, Tallinn, when the event was held there in May 2002.

The Brand Estonia campaign, executed by the British consultancy firm Interbrand, was one of the first nation branding campaigns. As such, it has received widespread attention from researchers and is probably the most covered campaign in the field of nation branding studies.⁶ No doubt, this is also due to Estonia’s policy, based on the Nordic model, of allowing public access to governmental documents. As a result, the campaign material, including the bilingual brand book *Eesti Stiil/Estonian Style*, was accessible online. Similar to the research on Estonia, most nation branding research is based on case studies of single campaigns or individual countries. Much attention has been paid to post-Soviet countries in eastern Europe, presumably because they share the historical conditions of being young nation-states with short histories of sovereignty and have sought to shake off their Soviet past and “rebrand” themselves as competitors in the global market for tourist and investor attention. This research includes the analyses by Volcic (2008) on post-Yugoslav countries, Aronczyk (2007) and Surowiec (2016) on Poland, Graan (2013) on Macedonia, Volcic (2012) and Volcic and Andrejevic (2011) on Slovenia, Kaneva and Popescu (2011) on Romania and Bulgaria, and Kaneva (2018) on Kosovo.

There are fewer works that seek to advance the theoretical understanding of nation branding. Furthermore, and as we discuss at length elsewhere (Bolin and Ståhlberg 2015), despite the fact that much branding research is conducted by media and communications scholars, the importance of mediation (as a communicative process) and the role of media (as technologies and organizations) is seldom theorized. The media are treated mainly as neutral platforms acted on by governments and brand professionals. This is a pity because the affordances carried by various media technologies, and the way they are organized, are vital to their ability to influence and stir up emotion and thus contribute to informational power, in Braman’s (2006) sense.

To a large extent, soft power, public diplomacy, and nation branding involve commercial actors and institutions in communication efforts. The

people involved are thus not trained in political communication to persuade citizens; rather, their backgrounds are in PR and advertising, practices aimed to promote desire among consumers. Through this influence, we witness the rise of the “brand state” (Van Ham 2001), and this conflation of the political and the commercial has been observed and theorized by several scholars. Pawel Surowiec (2016), for example, discusses this “new form of statecraft” within the framework of a “promotional culture” in his book *Nation Branding, Public Relations and Soft Power*. However, the idea that countries can be sold on a market and that their citizens can become props in this specific promotional culture met with criticism from cultural debaters and academics, especially those within what Nadia Kaneva (2011) calls the critical paradigm of nation branding studies. Within this paradigm, criticism of the practice of branding nations quickly developed, based on the argument that these activities commercialized and commodified national identities and produced a form of “commercial nationalism” (Volcic and Andrejevic 2011) or “national identity lite” (Kaneva and Popescu 2011). However, proponents of this type of information management quickly picked up on this criticism, and the concept of nation branding was largely abandoned within the practice field, paralleling the abandonment of propaganda (Jowett and O’Donnell 1992). Practitioners within the field launched alternative concepts such as competitive identity, brand management, or reputation management. Anholt (2007), who claims to have coined the concept of nation branding, soon abandoned it in favor of the concept of competitive identity.

Since public diplomacy research has its basis in practice, the main focus is often on the production side of the communication circuit, the “institutional practice and behaviour” (Pike 2021, 8), rather than on reception. In this, research on public diplomacy and nation branding shares characteristics with other practice-oriented research fields such as journalism and education, which focus on journalistic practice or didactic practical problems in the classroom. This is, of course, highly legitimate, but it means that some approaches are privileged before others. It also means that concepts are often picked up from practice jargon. They are thus descriptive, seeking to understand the nature of the activity—*what it is*—or policy oriented—how practice *should be*. In contrast, our interest lies in the implications of conceptual framing—*what concepts do*.

Braman argues that nation branding is a specific form of information policy, a part of the “continuing evolution of the informational

state” (2019, 149). This is also true for the other communicative activities described above. Nation branding, public diplomacy, and the managing of soft power are all activities that concern strategic communication—that is, communication that is goal oriented and aimed at some form of influence or persuasion through images, stories, and the choice of terminology. Terminological choices thus have an impact on communication acts, and words can be either positively or negatively loaded.

SWEET OR TOXIC WORDS?

There is a paradoxical relation between older and newer concepts of information policy. In a sense, propaganda and public diplomacy are very similar concepts. Both rely on the idea that states exercise influence by disseminating meaning rather than by using hard, coercive power, whether military or economic. Indeed, several scholars regard propaganda and public diplomacy as interchangeable concepts (Soules 2015, 121). And Nye contextualizes soft power in almost exactly the same way Lasswell ([1927] 1971) characterized propaganda: as the third source of influence a state may use, the first two being military and economic power. Simultaneously, public diplomacy and propaganda are usually understood as different forms of communication because they are commonsensically loaded with contrasting normative assumptions. Propaganda is never pleasant, and today, few state leaders would describe their information strategies as propaganda: *we* seek to achieve soft power through public diplomacy; *they* produce propaganda—or worse, they manufacture fake information that we try to counter. In a sense, propaganda has more in common with coercive power than with soft power because it implies violating subjects’ free will by imposing messages on them; in contrast, soft power supposedly works by “getting others to want the outcomes that you want” (Nye 2014, 20). While soft power and public diplomacy can be described as sweet, propaganda seems toxic.

Sweet and *toxic*: these two words capture the paradoxical impression of Ukrainian meaning management in the aftermath of the Euromaidan Revolution. Words, signs, and stories about Ukraine, transmitted to the rest of the world, have sometimes taken the form of uncontroversial images of pleasant people, resources, and places; this could be labeled soft power. At other times, communicated meanings have had an aggressive tone toward a perceived antagonist (usually Russia); in this case, they could be understood as

forms of propaganda. However, these two types of communication have not always been handled as separate categories in different campaigns or by divergent actors. Furthermore, the character of meaning management seems rather fluid, consisting of ingredients that could be mixed in various proportions rather than belonging to discrete categories. At its extremes, this brew would taste sweet or toxic, but often it would fall somewhere in between. And occasionally, the same mixture could taste rather differently, depending on the palate of the consumer. Whatever the case, the chefs involved in meaning management seem to be concerned with several dimensions of affect—as much as effect.⁷

Concepts such as propaganda, nation branding, soft power, and public diplomacy—or, for that matter, fake news and information war—are limited as analytical tools. They are stakes in the game of attention and influence and are thus “contentious concepts” that deserve analytical consideration (Stade 2017). In this context, we consider them part of the study object, and through this measure we hope to achieve at least three things: First, we want to avoid getting stuck in a rigid terminology loaded with normative assumptions and linked to rather obvious problems. Second, this intervention allows both greater sensibility toward the empirical material and the possibility of reconceptualizing the field of information management toward more strongly symbolic-oriented academic perspectives. Third, we want our analyses to include actions and practices of meaning management that occasionally seem nonsensical, playful, or unserious rather than thoroughly organized, strategically planned, and goal oriented. Particularly in chapter 4, we look at examples of content production with “affective dimensions” that would be difficult to grasp with concepts such as propaganda or public diplomacy (Kølvraa 2015).

In the following chapters, we look more closely at the fluidity of words and images and how the ambiguity of certain concepts is conditioning communicative policy and practice in the concrete conflictual situations Ukraine has experienced in the wake of Euromaidan. Importantly, words and concepts do not circulate as desultory units the communicator uses in a random manner. Words are symbolic components that may be used to build a signifying story. There is, of course, an academic concept for this level of sense-making: when words, events, people, and histories are linked to build a meaningful unity, they form a narrative. The term *narrative* has been popular in the social sciences for several decades, but much like *soft power*, it also circulates

outside of the academy, especially in journalistic discourse. However, in Ukraine, it was at a university that we first came across the idea of conceptualizing the management of meaning in terms of conflictual narratives.

NARRATIVES AND THE MANAGEMENT OF MEANING

The National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy is one of Ukraine's more prestigious research universities, with a prehistory dating back to the early seventeenth century. After independence in 1991, it was reorganized in its present form, and it played a central role in both the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan Revolution. Despite the university's relatively small size of around three thousand students, many of them have taken activist positions over the past couple of decades. Activism is especially intense in the Mohyla School of Journalism.

Yevhen Fedchenko is a professor of journalism and director of the Mohyla School of Journalism at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. He is also one of the initiators of StopFake—the fact-checking organization founded in March 2014 by students and faculty for the purpose of monitoring, countering, and debunking foreign—mainly Russian and Russian-supported—propaganda and fake news. StopFake is funded by individual donations and by grants from several international organizations, including the International Renaissance Foundation (part of George Soros's Open Society Foundation), National Endowment for Democracy (funded by the US Congress), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Sigrid Rausing Trust, and UK embassy. StopFake is directed toward an international audience, and its fact-checking services were initially available in five languages: Ukrainian, Russian, Romanian, Spanish, and English. In 2021 this expanded to include Serbian, French, German, Dutch, Czech, Italian, Bulgarian, and Polish.

In November 2014 we visited the academy and the journalism department to learn more about the activities of StopFake and the role of faculty and students. Our conversation soon centered around the complexities of communication, the effect of news on opinions, the perils of journalists' angles, and the specific difficulties of debunking Russian news stories. Interestingly, Fedchenko talked about news stories as narratives. Russian narratives, he argued, are clever because they are seldom completely false; rather, they are twisted in a way that leads interpretations in certain directions. For example, when Russian media reported that the Ukrainian revolution was a fascist

revolution and that the Ukrainian army was a fascist army, this was hard to debunk because there were admittedly battalions whose members were openly fascist. Most infamous in this respect was, at the time of our interview, the Azov battalion, a unit of Ukrainian volunteers that had also attracted far-right volunteers from all over the world. When the Russian media depicted the Ukrainian army as fascist, they were of course implying that these elements in the Azov battalion were representative of the whole army.⁸

Arguably, the narrative concept is a well-theorized part of textual analysis, developed from the interpretative approaches of comparative literature, film studies, structuralism, and Russian formalism. The way Fedchenko discusses it, however, is quite general and more in line with the conceptualization of narrative from political science and international relations literature, where the concept of *strategic narrative* has gained increased popularity in recent years.⁹ Strategic narrative, as defined by the main proponents of the concept (and the ones most often referred to)—Alister Miskimmon, Ben O’Loughlin, and Laura Roselle (2013)—builds on theoretical and epistemological inspiration from Kenneth Burke’s (1969) rhetoric. It consists of four components: character and actors, setting/environment/space, conflict or action, and resolution or suggested resolution. Following these components, the analysis of strategic narratives focuses on three levels: international systems narratives, which “describe how the world is structured, who the players are, and how it works,” exemplified by “narratives such as the Cold War”; national narratives, which “set out what the story of the state or nation is, what values and goals it has,” such as “the US as peace-loving”; and issue narratives, which “set out why a policy is needed and (normatively) desirable, and how it will be successfully implemented or accomplished” (Roselle, Miskimmon, and O’Loughlin 2014, 76).

Although the theory of strategic narratives contains some of the components of what could be called classic narrative theory, we find the concept of strategic narrative somewhat undertheorized. First, the lack of a temporal structure makes actors’ relations incomprehensible or at least hard to explain. Relatedly, the absence of causal relations between events, contexts, and actions undermines its explanatory power. In our view, strategic narratives, as they are exemplified (e.g., the Cold War), are not narratives at all but perhaps discourses or apprehensions of the various positions of international actors (e.g., nation-states). Our analysis is thus based on a more classical tradition of narrative analysis. At its most basic, a narrative is a sequence of

events assembled in a temporal flow to make a meaningful whole. Tzvetan Todorov (1969) famously defined a narrative as a sequence of interrelated events that unfolds from a state of equilibrium, with the introduction of a problem that is then solved and equilibrium is restored. Todorov, of course, was a literary critic, and his example was *Decameron*, but the “getting-in-and-out-of-trouble” principle of his narrative analysis has been proved to fit fictional film and television. Arguably, when we seek to understand the world around us, we try to make seemingly discrete events meaningful by relating them to one another, and many times this meaning construction takes the form of a coherent narrative, where the events we encounter have a causal relation. The logic of these constructions follows the narrative pattern of narratologists such as Todorov and Vladimir Propp ([1928] 1968), who famously deconstructed the Russian folktale into functional narrative elements and characters. A famous example of Proppian analysis of popular culture is Umberto Eco’s examination of the novels of Ian Fleming, where he uses Proppian narrative analysis to reveal the novels’ game-like structure in which James Bond “moves and mates in eight moves” (Eco 1981, 161). Another example is Janice Radway’s ([1984] 1991) seminal critique of the romance novel, where she combines narrative and reception analysis.

Both Propp and Todorov have proved useful for the analysis of popular fiction, but they can also be used to analyze other genres, such as news. News reporting in both print and audiovisual media often employs tropes and characters that are functional in an overarching story and are made intelligible through familiar patterns of narration and generic conventions (Carey 1983; Schudson 1982, 2005; Dahlgren 1999). Narratives in the form of myths have been a main component of poststructural anthropology and semiotics, and they have also been used to analyze various types of live-broadcast media events. Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (1992) define *media events* as a unique television genre that disrupts the everyday routine with live broadcasts across all channels. These events are typically “organized outside of the media” and orchestrated by “public bodies with whom the media cooperate, such as governments, parliaments (congressional committees, for example), political parties (national conventions), [and] international bodies (the Olympic committee)”; they are “pre-planned” and “presented with reverence and ceremony” (Dayan and Katz 1992, 5–7). Media events, Dayan and Katz argue, are “ceremonial enactments of the bases of authority” in society, and their ritual function is one of reconciliation and reintegration (43).

This theory has been widely employed in media and cultural studies, and there are plenty of case studies on various kinds of media events, such as coronations, funerals, and popular culture events.

The theory of media events has been criticized for being, among other things, too functionalist. The most elaborate critique has been advanced in a series of articles by Nick Couldry (2000, 2003, 2006), who argues that, in addition to its functionalist bias, Dayan and Katz's work is affirmative and not critical enough of the media's power. Dayan and Katz do not deny that their theory is functionalist. This is indeed the main point of their analysis of societal integration. However, the claim that the theory therefore cannot deal with societal change is perhaps less true. In chapter 4 we highlight the development of this specific narrative theory and point to the subcategory of events that Dayan and Katz call "transformative."¹⁰

The media events theory has also been criticized for neglecting news events, and some have cited the 2001 terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in New York City as an example (Stepinska 2010). This criticism has also been at least partly acknowledged. Elihu Katz and Tamar Liebes discuss the "declining centrality of media events" in light of "three types of trauma that seemed to have resolutely moved to center-stage": terror, disaster, and war (2007, 159ff.). They also identify a fourth trauma that they deliberately set aside: revolution.

In its original conception, in the criticism, and in the theory's revision, the analysis of media events has emphasized the narrative unfolding of stories, following an inner dynamic. Because media events are preplanned, everybody understands what is about to happen (a coronation, a state funeral, the Olympic Games) and when it is going to happen, contributing to the "mass ceremony." The three types of events that Dayan and Katz label contests, conquests, and coronations have a narrative closing point: someone wins (and others lose), something is conquered (e.g., a peace deal between nation-states is closed), or someone is crowned. The general outcome of the event is thus known beforehand. In fact, it can be argued that the events themselves are orchestrated along narrative principles, ending with narrative closure.

This is also why Katz and Liebes's (2007) expansion of the media events theory fits uneasily into the original events theory. However, even if the outcome of a news event is less certain than, say, a funeral, this does not mean it is devoid of narrative elements. Most news stories have a fixed gallery of narrative functions in the Proppian sense. Most obviously there are

heroes and villains—the good guys and the bad guys—but there are other functional characters as well, such as false heroes, donors, and helpers.

There are also clear narrative conventions related to news that have been analyzed within the framework of journalism studies. The “summary lead,” for example, is a narrative convention that has developed over the years in print journalism (Schudson 1982). Similarly, the segmentation of broadcast news has been highlighted as a specific television format, but it also corresponds with non-news formats such as live entertainment television. John Ellis makes the important point that television narration is built on segments, which can be described as self-contained units with internal narrative structures that are assembled into larger wholes (programs). This is especially true in fictional TV series, but it also occurs in news broadcasts, where the news bulletin can be seen as “the first true use of the open-ended series format . . . endlessly updating events and never synthesising them” (Ellis 1992, 145). We have elsewhere extended this idea to live broadcasts of other genres such as election night coverage, game shows, and the Eurovision Song Contest (Bolin 2009). Likewise, foreign news is guided by “storylines,” or overarching themes that help a correspondent select, contextualize, and present an event taking place in a designated region to make the reporting comprehensible to the audience (Hannerz 2004, 102ff.). Such narrative conventions are part of the various genre systems—the taken-for-granted “contract” between producers of stories and their audiences. They are thus important ingredients in the management of meaning; they direct audiences toward certain interpretations rather than others, but of course, they never determine how a story can be interpreted.

Within organizational communication one usually talks in terms of “information management,” where the concept is a key tool in analyzing how corporations administer and control internal information flows to optimize activities (Choo 2006). Information management deals with “the control over how information is created, acquired, organised, stored, distributed, and used as a means of promoting, efficient and effective information access, processing, and use” (Detlor 2010, 103). The concept of information, however, implies the transmission of ideas from one sender to one or many receivers. When looking at communication practices in Ukraine, our approach is more interpretive and more in line with a ritual conception of communication. We emphasize meaning-making among those who construct messages. This is also why we emphasize the *management*

of meaning. In this type of discursive management, concepts such as propaganda, persuasion, branding, disinformation, misinformation, fake news, and the like become stakes in a struggle for discursive dominance in informational space, rather than analytical tools.

To manage meaning, as we theorize it, indicates intentionality. However, as the following chapters show, intentionality varies among different agents, who might have similar yet slightly different motives for their communication efforts. These multiple motives and related meanings are then negotiated in the texts that result from these efforts, similar to how meaning is negotiated in reception. Meaning can never be determined among the receivers of messages, and what the sender has control over—whether that sender is an individual or an organization—is the composition of signs (although complex communication situations make total control difficult). As Sven Ross (2008) has argued with reference to Stuart Hall's (1973) encoding-decoding model, negotiations occur both at the moment of encoding and at the moment of decoding. What possible meaning is produced in the end is an empirical question. In the following chapters, we use the concept of management of meaning to highlight the intentionality and the will to use communicative tools strategically, while we reserve the concept of management of information to describe the activity by which individuals manage signs.

The management of meaning is an activity conducted by *agents* working with media technologies to construct narratives, discourses, and images. They do so within the framework of certain *forms of communication*. These constructions, and the forms they are based on, are managed at certain specific occasions—certain *events* that have to be understood in light of the contextual factors surrounding them. This is the analytical model we propose for the following chapters.

CONCLUSION

We opened this chapter by describing three tumultuous events that all started on the same square in Kyiv within three decades. It would, of course, be reasonable to ask why these events occurred, how they happened, or what their political and social consequences were. But instead, the perspective we have outlined is concerned mainly with understanding how the meanings of these events have been managed. Thus, we discussed how words are used—for example, by conceptualizing, linking, and labeling the three Ukrainian

events as consecutive revolutions. In consonance with the discussion on narrativity in the last section, we should explain that line of reasoning.

When linked together, the three Ukrainian revolutions can be read as a story—a narrative moving from a beginning to an end and unfolding Ukraine’s recent history in sequence. The story commences when the country is still part of an oppressive empire and times are hard and gray: the first revolution occurred “on granite.” The second event took place during a period of expectations, when emancipating revolts were happening around the world; that revolution had the bright (but somewhat ambiguous) color of orange. The last event signified closure: the story came to an end, as that revolution meant the country had achieved dignity. The framing of these events as a narrative trope in which the Ukrainian nation-state gradually shakes off its Soviet legacy follows a narrative pattern similar to how filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein illustrates the popular uprising in the famous Odesa steps scene of *The Battleship Potemkin* (1925). That scene ends in a montage of three statues of lions juxtaposed to rise from a resting to a standing position, illustrating the uprising against the oppressors. Similarly, one could interpret the narrativization of Ukraine’s post-Soviet history in terms of the three revolutions.

Of course, the real story of Ukraine has no closure. At the time of this writing, a full-scale war is going on. Uncertainty reigns regarding Ukraine’s political and economic future and even its sovereignty as a nation-state. Not least, the management of meaning about Ukraine is an activity conducted against a powerful aggressor with vast military and informational resources. In the following chapter we take a closer look at those who are formulating and telling the Ukrainian counternarrative.

