

Art as Women`s Soft Power during Wartime

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Master's Degrees by Examination and Dissertation

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Abstract

The dissertation investigates the role of Ukrainian women artists in shaping political, social, and cultural narratives during wartime, with a particular emphasis on their contributions through *soft power*. Using a qualitative approach, the research is based on interviews with ten Ukrainian women artists and examines how their artistic practices serve as tools of cultural diplomacy, fostering national identity and shaping perceptions of the Ukrainian-Russian war.

The study explores how these women use art not only as a form of emotional and political expression but also as a method to mediate conflict and engage international audiences. Their work documents the human and social costs of the war, helping to bridge divides, promote understanding, and shape both domestic and global perceptions of the conflict. Key findings reveal that women artists take on dual roles, participating in both soft power through cultural diplomacy and hard power through military-related activities, with their personal experiences informing their creative work. This combination of roles enhances the authenticity and emotional impact of their art.

Despite the significance of these contributions, the research highlights a lack of state support for soft power initiatives, particularly during the war, where government resources are primarily allocated to military needs. The study advocates for the Ukrainian government to invest more in cultural diplomacy and artistic projects as vital components of soft power, promoting Ukraine's narratives on the international stage and preparing for future post-war mediation.

In conclusion, the dissertation underscores the need for further academic research on the role of art in soft power, particularly regarding how cultural initiatives can contribute to peacebuilding, narrative creation, and international relations during and after wartime. Women artists, with their perspectives and experiences, are positioned as important contributors to this process.

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Chapter I: Introduction

1. Background

Modern wars, such as Russia's war against Ukraine, are characterised not only by physical combat but also by significant information confrontations. British journalist David Patrikarakos pointed out in his research that modern military conflicts have a new, hybrid nature. By studying military operations in the Middle East and the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in 2014, he observed that wars have become less distinct, with informational conflict often preceding actual combat and persisting long after it ends. They have become extraspatial because, due to information networks, the conflict now encompasses much wider territories than those directly affected by hostilities. These conflicts are also always hybrid in nature, combining military actions with significant informational and cultural influence [Patrikarakos, 2017]. Hence, the dynamics of modern warfare present opportunities for studying the impact of cultural phenomena and creative industry products, which can play a crucial role in information warfare. This dissertation will specifically examine the role of art in the Russian-Ukrainian war.

2. Problem statement

Art plays a significant role in shaping social, political, and cultural narratives and influencing public opinion. This is especially true during times of war, as demonstrated by the Ukrainian-Russian conflict. Since the war began in 2014, Ukrainian artists have used their work to address the impact of the conflict, serving as a powerful cultural force in shaping public perception. Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Ukrainian artists, particularly women, have emerged as central figures in shaping the cultural response to the war. Many of these women have personal connections to the conflict, with relatives serving on the front lines or being directly affected by the war. Through various forms of art, including visual, performance, and digital media, these artists are documenting the emotional and psychological toll of the war, expressing themes of pain, hope, resistance, and identity—[Women's eNews, 2023; UN Women, 2023].

Women use their artistic voices not only to express their personal experiences but also to comment on the broader social and political realities facing Ukraine during the war. Through their creativity, people worldwide can gain insights into these realities. Therefore, the artistic practices of women during the war serve as a form of soft power that helps uphold national

identity, share Ukrainian perspectives on the war, document war crimes, and facilitate international cultural exchange. This highlights the potential for a more in-depth exploration of art as a soft power tool and women's role in artistic endeavours during wartime.

There is also a lack of understanding of how women artists can influence the social, political, and cultural outcomes of war through their work. Art can be a powerful tool for political influence and social transformation [Edelman, 1995; Nye, 1990]. However, there is a lack of data on how it affects specific social and political changes in the context of contemporary conflict. The issue of state support for these socially important initiatives is also crucial. By exploring the intersection of gender, art, and conflict, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how art acts as a powerful form of soft power during the war, particularly for women, whose voices are often ignored in more traditional narratives of conflict.

Based on interviews with 10 Ukrainian women artists and drawing on the theoretical framework of women's roles in wartime, soft power, and the transformative role of art, I will argue that Ukrainian women artists fulfil crucial social roles that go beyond mere artistic expression. I claim that their art not only documents the human cost of war but also functions as a form of soft power, shaping political and cultural narratives while fostering understanding between conflicting parties. Through their engagement with the emotional, social, and political realities of the Ukrainian-Russian war, these artists contribute to both domestic and international perceptions of the conflict, influencing how it is understood globally.

The soft power theory shows that artistic practices can serve as subtle yet powerful tools of influence during wartime. The emotional and symbolic power of Ukrainian women's art can influence the creation of narratives that, in turn, affect political discourses. Art can evoke emotional responses, call for social justice, provoke dialogue between people with differing political views, sustain national identity, and mobilise resistance against aggression. Women artists, as mediators and cultural ambassadors, engage in activities that bridge divides and promote social cohesion, making art a tool for reconciliation and international solidarity.

I suggest that women artists can impact social dynamics during wartime by exploring themes of loss, survival, and resilience, which deeply resonate with both local and global audiences. Their art depicts the trauma of war while offering pathways for internal and global dialogue. Additionally, women artists use their military-related experiences to create more authentic and powerful artistic expressions, allowing their work to serve as a bridge between personal experience and public understanding of the war. This combination of soft and hard power roles enhances their ability to influence perceptions and create lasting social change.

Based on evidence and theoretical frameworks, I argue that women can choose from various social roles during wartime, including those involving both soft and hard power. Many women artists do not limit themselves to artistic or social activist roles but also engage in military-related activities, incorporating these experiences into their creative work. This demonstrates that women consciously navigate between soft and hard power roles, reflecting a deep understanding of their importance during wartime. Furthermore, within the context of the global impact of soft power, I contend that art can shape the future social order by illustrating the diverse roles women take on during wartime, challenging traditional gender norms and fostering a more inclusive narrative of the war.

However, despite the importance of soft power, Ukraine has not yet given sufficient attention to developing and utilising it during the war. As shown through interviews, many women artists rely on personal initiative or foreign grants to sustain their art projects, while the Ukrainian government prioritises military needs. Ukraine must not only invest more in soft power initiatives but also develop structured programs of cultural diplomacy that actively promote the country's narratives abroad. In the context of ongoing conflict, it is critical for Ukraine to engage in creating wartime narratives that accurately reflect its values, experiences, and identity. Moreover, as the country prepares for eventual post-war mediation and reconciliation, further academic research into the role of art in soft power is essential to understanding how cultural initiatives can contribute to peacebuilding, narrative creation, and international dialogue.

3. Aims, Objectives and Research Questions of the Study

Aims:

This study aims to explore the role of Ukrainian women artists during the Ukrainian-Russian war as agents of social, political, and cultural influence. Specifically, it seeks to analyse how their artistic work functions as a form of soft power, impacting public opinion, shaping cultural memory, and challenging political narratives.

Objectives:

- To examine the socially important roles that Ukrainian women artists play during wartime.

- To explore how women artists can influence social, political, and cultural outcomes through their art.
- To assess the level of support for women's artistic initiatives by the Ukrainian state during the war.

Research Questions:

- What socially important roles do women artists play during wartime?
- How can women artists influence wartime social, political, and cultural outcomes?
- Does the state support socially important art initiatives during wartime?

Chapter II: Theoretical Frameworks

1. Theoretical Frameworks of Soft Power

1.1 The Concept of Soft Power

The concept of soft power was introduced by Joseph Nye over 30 years ago. In the early 2000s, he further developed his idea and explained how soft power can achieve international goals without coercion or force. Nye defines soft power as "the ability to attract, and attraction often leads to acquiescence" [Nye, 1990, p.6]. Soft power involves influencing others and shaping their preferences through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or payment. According to Nye, "attraction" refers to the appeal of values, culture, political ideas, or politics. This type of power in international politics depends on the ability to set agendas, shape preferences, and establish frameworks within which other actors in global politics operate [Nye, 1990]. For instance, the United States has utilised its cultural assets, such as Hollywood and popular music, for many years to create a positive image in the eyes of other nations, thereby advancing American values and interests on the global stage [Aydemir, 2017].

The concept of soft power has evolved and been influenced by various cultural backgrounds. "Soft power" can be broadly or narrowly interpreted. In a broader sense, it refers to non-military influence, including cultural and economic impact. In a narrower sense, it is synonymous with cultural influence, specifically the ability to shape perceptions and narratives about a country without direct political or military engagement. For instance, art can transcend borders, subtly disseminating values, ideologies, and cultural identity, making it a powerful tool for influencing national and international audiences [Vuving, 2009]. From here on, this dissertation will specifically focus on a narrow understanding of soft power by examining how female artists, especially during times of war, utilise their creative expressions to shape public sentiment, foster solidarity, and participate in cultural diplomacy.

In this context, Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities is worth mentioning. He emphasised the significance of using imagination to construct narratives about the nation, which are crucial for real political formations. Anderson argued that the development of a nation requires a rich culture of social imagination, and successful political nations are the products of this. If we consider nations as "narrations", then how a nation tells its story inevitably influences the type of nation it becomes. For instance, these national narratives can be expressed in cultural nationalism projects, such as music, poetry, artistic

prose, and visual arts, vividly portraying nationalistic and patriotic sentiments [Anderson, 2006].

Governments typically use a variety of policy tools to exert cultural soft power. These tools include cultural events, student exchange programs, broadcasting, teaching the country's language, and promoting the study of its culture and society within and outside its borders. However, it's important to note that these activities are not direct soft power but rather indirect. They can help promote understanding, nurture positive images, and spread myths that benefit the country. Myths are a powerful tool for shaping the views and desires of others. For example, economic success and military victory are not primarily tools of politics, but they can be used to create myths about the invincibility of a country, its power, and the strong spirit of its people. Often, aggressive states use peace rhetoric to create a myth of benevolence [Vuving, 2009].

1.2 Soft Power and its Importance in Wartime

The use of soft power in wars has gained new momentum in the last ten years. Many researchers have started analysing the concept of hybrid warfare, which includes information warfare and typically involves both hard and soft power. The Ukrainian-Russian war is a clear example of a hybrid war. In addition to the hostilities that began in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea by Russia, the conflict between these countries is characterised by a constant information confrontation. Galeotti, who examines the limitations of Russia's soft power in achieving its geopolitical aims, argues that Russia's tactics involve creating a narrative of power aimed at deterring adversaries and destabilising alliances such as NATO and the EU. Russia's use of soft power tends more toward coercion, reflecting a broader influence strategy combining hard and soft power elements. With its imperial roots, Russia extends its cultural and political influence to most countries in its region. This makes Russia a regional cultural hegemon, confirming its soft, solid power presence. Therefore, in the Russian-Ukrainian war, soft power emerged as a special tool in diplomacy and a unique weapon in a war between two states. This power can potentially influence the war's future social, cultural, and political outcomes [Galeotti, 2016].

As this dissertation focuses on how Ukrainian women artists can utilise soft power in the ongoing conflict, it is essential to consider how Ukraine can garner support for artistic initiatives. This research emphasises the influence of soft power in shaping the behaviour and preferences of others through the creation of narratives, dissemination of cultural codes, and

promotion of values. Art, as a form of artistic expression, emerges as a vital soft power tool in this context. Since 2013, the economic crisis and the escalation of the military conflict in the East of the country have led to a reduction in budget allocations from the State Budget of Ukraine for maintaining the network of cultural institutions. As a result, budget funding has significantly lagged and continues to lag behind the needs of the industry. Local budgets also cannot fully ensure the normal functioning of cultural objects. However, grants and financial support provided by the Ukrainian Cultural Fund (UCF), the State Agency of Ukraine for Cinema, and the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine may be among the tools for supporting artistic projects. Organisational support can be provided by promoting Ukrainian artists in the international arena and holding cultural events at the state level. Another means of support can be educational. The state can open advanced training and programs and announce contests for scholarships and awards for outstanding achievements in various fields of art. Additionally, state TV channels can support media for spreading news about art projects [Soroka, 2017].

2. Art as a Soft Power

2.1 *The Transformative Role of Art*

Art is a powerful method to express civic stances and convey political messages, making it a soft power tool. According to Ellen Dissanayake, art is characterised by conscious intent, the capacity to unite disparate elements, and a focus on change, variety, familiarity, surprise, tension, and release. Furthermore, art employs sensual materials and conveys symbolism, meaning, and a sense of unity or wholeness [Dissanayake, 1990, p.202]. Art is intimately intertwined with human emotions and can be defined as a "form of feeling" that emerges from the interplay between an artist's sensory knowledge, playfulness, creativity, and historical techniques and means of production [O'Neil, 2008, p.8].

There are various approaches to understanding art, all driven by the common belief that art is a product of human activity and can convey meanings that influence our perception of specific events or phenomena. As a result, art is considered a social product rather than an individual endeavour [Edelman, 1995, pp. 1-2]. It reflects and analyses human experiences and the surrounding environment as a unique form of communication and knowledge transmission. Artists enable viewers to move beyond the rational understanding of an object or situation and experience a more sensory understanding, allowing people to engage in the artist's experience.

Through human interaction with art, there is potential for a dialogue between the artist and others. O'Neil discusses how art can help migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees express their lived history, navigate identity, and connect with others. Refugees can utilise various artistic practices to challenge and reshape the narratives imposed on them, fostering empowerment and resilience. Participatory and collaborative art is crucial in creating spaces where refugees can contribute to and influence cultural and social discourses [O'Neil, 2008].

Although some works of art may not be widely known, they can provoke discussions and create narratives that extend beyond the realm of art. Art enables people to explore the world around them, helping them recognise and comprehend a particular environment and their role within it. The "imaginative image" crafted by a piece of art is a framework for how the world is perceived [Eisner, 2003]. Hence, art becomes a powerful tool for influencing people, their judgments, and worldviews. Visual images and art representations can bring people together and create social divisions. Art can delve into the complexities of life while also creating ambiguity [Edelman, 1995, p. 4]. However, it can simplify life's disorder and make people's contradictions understandable, making it an indispensable part of society [Edelman, 1995, pp. 1-4].

2.2 The Relationship Between Conflict, Art, and Political Identity

This dissertation argues that understanding identity is crucial for analyzing armed conflicts and their resolution. Initially, I will delve into the concept of identity to explore its interconnectedness with these phenomena. The definition of identity is context-dependent and multifaceted. Generally, identity denotes the fundamental similarity among members of a group or category. It is an essential aspect of individual or collective "self" and a foundational condition of social existence. The term "identity" is often used to signify something profound, basic, or permanent. It also emphasises the interactive development of collective self-understanding, solidarity, or "group," which is crucial for enabling collective action [Brubaker & Cooper, 2000].

Since the dissertation focuses on armed conflicts, usually accompanied by the clash of different identities, it is appropriate to determine which identities are in question. In this case, attention will be focused on the analysis of collective political identity (that includes nationwide, national, and civil identities), which "is a basis for the consolidation of citizens regarding the core social values" [Pashyna, 2020, p.88]. In this case, it is also possible to consider the political identity as "the set of social and political values and principles that we

recognise as ours, or in the sharing of which we feel like "us", like a political group or entity" [Cerutti, 2003, p.27]. However, it is worth noting that political identity is formed due to processes within society (identification) and external processes (de-identification). In other words, "others" (those who have an identity different from ours) are a way for "us" to see our differences when we interact, that is, to define "who we are" and "who we are not" [Epstein, 2011, p. 337]. Given this theory, long-term conflicts, which are characterised by everyday violence and the confrontation of value orientations between opposing parties, are also related to the formation of identity [Ricarte, 2023, p.37] because "the relationship with the other is the very site where its original identity takes shape" [Epstein, 2011, p. 337].

While wars stimulated identity formation, art was one way of broadcasting that identity. That is why, over the centuries, wars and conflicts have become a reason for creative artistic activity to preserve and convey to the world the cultural code of the nation. The high importance of creative manifestations for the collective political identity can be explained by *heritage preservation*, as they can serve as archives for cultural legacies; *symbolism and representation*, as visual arts can serve as cues that communicate cultural meanings and translate understanding of the values that shaped them; *storytelling and narrative*, as artists can highlight the struggles, triumphs, and issues of culture; *cultural commentary and criticism*, as artists can express social and political issues through their artistic creations, etc. Also, by providing a platform for marginalised communities to express themselves, art enables them to reclaim their identities and confront dominant power structures [Al-Zadjali, 2024, pp. 236-240].

One of the most vivid examples in this context is the case of Northern Ireland. The ethnic-political conflict known as the "The Troubles" took place mainly in Northern Ireland and lasted from the late 1960s until the signing of the Belfast Agreement in 1998 ("Good Friday Agreement"). Art that is important for an example of identity transition during conflict is the Murals in Northern Ireland. They appeared in the 1970s as an expression of cultural and political identity in the context of the conflict. Murals were used to convey political messages, immortalise historical events, and express cultural aspects of the community. Political murals were created by actors on both sides of the conflict, predominantly in Belfast and Derry. The murals' role in the political culture of Northern Ireland was to act as a way for the expression of political and ethnonational identity and express the communal identities and ideological messages of organisations on both sides of the conflict [Sluka, 2016, pp.19- 215]. They also have been used as "sites of articulation and contestation, locations where political modalities can be asserted, violence threatened, history interpreted, identities expressed, and jokes made" [Crowley, 2015, p. 58].

2.3 Art as a Tool for Cooperative Relations Between Conflicting Sides

In any conflict, there comes a stage when the conflicting parties have to find common ground. This applies to both the global level, where representatives of the conflicting parties sit down at the negotiating table, and to the reconciliation process between the victims of the conflict on both sides. Mediation plays a significant role in this context, involving various techniques and approaches. It is important to focus on the role of art as a tool for building cooperative relationships between conflicting sides, which can be used in mediation. To demonstrate the potential of art in this process, I will give an example of the theory of transformative learning [Mezirow, 1997] and cooperative relationships and behaviour [Deutsch & Coleman, 2014]. These theories describe how art can cause radical changes in the thinking and behaviour of people involved in the conflict, contribute to creating space for cooperation in conflict situations, and ultimately affect understanding between conflicting parties.

Firstly, art can be used in the psychosocial sphere of conflict transformation as part of a human security approach to conflict resolution. This approach prioritises essential human needs such as safety, well-being, and livelihood over political aims. It expands conflict-resolution efforts to all societal levels, moving beyond state-centric methods. This allows art to be part of innovative approaches to peacebuilding [Bergh & Sloboda, 2023, pp. 3-4]. Transformational learning is also integrated into the psychosocial sphere of conflict transformation. The founder of the transformational learning theory, Jack Mezirow, defined it as "the process of effecting change in a frame of reference" [Mezirow, 1997, p. 5]. This theory describes the processes that bring our consciousness to a new level with the help of strong emotions and new impressions. Often, such moments can radically change the image of thoughts, point of view, attitude towards the issue, and patterns of behaviour - in other words, to start the same "transformations". For example, engaging in artistic practices can promote transformative learning and help people develop or strengthen their abilities to engage more constructively in conflicts and build more cooperative relationships [Bang, 2016, pp. 365-370].

Secondly, art also carries "the potential for making conflict rooted in diversity more constructive for learning" as well as "the power to make psychological and societal boundaries more porous" [Hayes & Yorks, 2007, p. 92]. Therefore, participating in the arts is a collaborative process that can help people reframe conflict to foster cooperation. According to the theory of Coleman and Deutsch, a competitive approach to conflict results in limited judgment, reduced complexity, a lack of consideration for alternative perspectives, and diminished creative problem-solving. Using art in the mediation process can provide a new

perspective on conflict, portraying it as a mutual problem that conflicting parties can work on together cooperatively to find mutually satisfactory solutions. This approach is crucial for creative resolution and enables opposing parties to view themselves as collaborators rather than opponents in resolving their conflict [Coleman & Deutsch, 2014, pp. 402-404]. Art can help build bridges between differences, encouraging an attempt to understand the "otherness" of opponents and shape the political and emotional landscape of present and future generations [Latar & Wind, 2018, pp. 9-10].

An example of the practical embodiment of conflict transformation in the psychosocial sphere is the cooperation of conflicting parties during musical events. Since the 1970s, such events have been held in late modern countries, featuring similar concerts. While not a formal method, the primary aim of these events is often described as an effort to "build bridges" between different groups perceived to be in conflict. For instance, mediation efforts at the non-state level have used the arts to address conflicts in the Balkans and between Israel and Palestine. Examples include joint folk art exhibitions by Jewish and Palestinian diaspora communities in Boston, theatre used for reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, multicultural workshops involving music therapy with children, and brass band performances bringing together children from different ethnic groups alongside foreign visitors [Bergh & Sloboda, 2010, pp. 5-6].

2.4 The Influence of Ideology on Art

With the help of art, people tried to interpret historical events, giving them visual images, creating literary characters, conveying the emotional colouring of events using audio means, etc. In this way, art serves as a powerful tool for immortalising historical events and engaging with them indirectly because art creates a world that "people do not directly observe or touch" [Edelman, 1995, p.1]. Hence, art appears as one of the ways of creating reality, in particular political reality, because created images, models, and symbols that "come from works of art in all genres" [Edelman, 1995, p.1] can shape political discourse, and beliefs about politics and encourage specific actions.

Therefore, it follows that art as a social product can offer multiple models of political reality. People, in turn, choose one or another art product depending on their ideology. This mechanism also works the other way around – a country or a political elite can popularise art products corresponding to their ideology. This mechanism confirms that "there can be no politics without art and ideology" [Edelman, 1995, p. 4].

This dissertation will provide an example of how ideology influences the meanings attributed to works of art. One of the most significant conflicts of the 20th century was the Second World War, which impacted visual artists, writers, filmmakers, and other artists. Monumental art was often used to commemorate this tragedy. However, the ideological content of these monuments varied, leading to different aspects of the same event being glorified in other parts of the world.

"While abstract counter-monuments emerged in the West after World War II, the heroic image of the fallen soldier dominated in the Soviet Union" [Kattago, 2009, p. 157]. The Bronze Soldier War Memorial in Tallinn, Estonia, is a notable example of these differing values. This monument follows the typical design of Soviet war memorials in capital cities. It is large and built in the Social Realist style. Situated centrally and close to Red Army cemeteries, a forensic investigation revealed that 12 men and one woman were buried near the monument. Soviet archival documents also showed that the Bronze Soldier Memorial served as the final resting place for Soviet soldiers who lost their lives fighting Nazi soldiers. The monument evolved into a ritualised location to commemorate the Soviet Union's victory over fascism and to honour the Russian nation, especially after Estonian re-independence. As a result, the Bronze Soldier used to be a traditional gathering place for Victory Day celebrations among the Russian people in Tallinn.

However, with time, Estonians strongly opposed the symbolic meaning of this memorial. The statue was moved to the Defense Forces Cemetery on the outskirts of Tallinn. In its new location, the memorial honours both the Great Patriotic War and World War II, with headstones inscribed "To the Unknown Soldier, 1941–1945" and "To Those Killed in the Second World War" in Estonian and Russian. It is also crucial that "the cemetery setting tends to emphasise loss rather than victory" [Kattago, 2009, pp. 150-166]. Hence, this example demonstrates the struggle between two narratives that contain opposed meanings of the same event and vividly reflects the relationship between ideology, politics, and art.

So, using art to spread narratives and shape ideologies is a vital part of the political struggle to influence public opinion, especially in the context of soft power. States and political groups can construct and disseminate ideological messages through cultural products like monuments and other art forms, influencing national identity, historical memory, and political reality. Art reflects narratives and shapes them, offering people new interpretations of conflicts and creating reasons for national pride.

3. Theoretical Frameworks on Women's Roles at War Time

3.1 Gender Perspectives in Conflict Resolution and Peace-Building

Feminists worldwide are actively highlighting women's contributions to conflict resolution and peacebuilding, advocating for the inclusion of gender issues in the agendas of international peacekeeping organisations. In this dissertation, I will focus on two themes that are the subject of feminist debate regarding conflict resolution. The first theme explores the "female point of view" on peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The second theme involves critiquing the portrayal of men and women as "opposed monolithic entities" [Sharoni, 2010, p.6]. I aim to delve deeper into what some feminists believe distinguishes a woman's perspective on conflicts and peace and to understand the primary argument for criticising the perception of war as exclusively a male domain.

Since the late 1920s, feminists have actively addressed the struggle for women's rights and reexamined the social role of women. With rethinking gender roles and war, the idea that war is "masculine" and peace is "feminine" gained widespread acceptance. This notion is supported by the belief that women are naturally inclined toward anti-military stances. For instance, the renowned feminist Virginia Woolf argued that women are vital to protecting freedom and preventing wars because the desire for peace is inherent in female nature [Woolf, 1938, p. 197].

The research conducted since the mid-1970s has focused on explaining the unique skills of women in peace and nonviolent conflict resolution. For instance, Sarah Ruddick has discussed the concept of a "universal maternal mindset," characterised by empathy and care. The author argues that women's maternal thinking is shaped by the generational experience of caring for and nurturing children, which is inherently linked to feelings of protection and peace rather than violence and war [Ruddick, 1989, pp. 143-159].

Some researchers argue that men are naturally more aggressive than women, and therefore, war is seen as a "male affair" [Zalewski 1995, p.349]. Additionally, statistics show that women commit less violence and murder than men [Zalewski, 1995; Fukuyama, 1998]. Francis Fukuyama points out that males, similar to the wild world of chimpanzees, mainly commit violence in all types of human societies. He referenced recent discoveries in evolutionary psychology that reveal profound differences between the sexes, particularly in the

areas of violence and aggression, suggesting the natural aggressiveness of men and the peace-loving nature of women [Fukuyama, 1998, pp. 24-40]. However, Fukuyama's hypotheses faced feminist criticism, asserting that women are morally superior and more peaceful than men. Many have argued that women's association with peace and moral superiority has historically kept them out of power. This can contribute to the entrenchment of gender stereotypes in society, negatively affecting the role of women, undermining their authority as participants in international politics and national security, and, in particular, harming peacebuilding [Tickner, 1999, pp. 4-11].

Over time, feminist researchers have moved beyond the biological concepts of "female" and "male" to analyse gender as socially and culturally constructed categories of masculinity and femininity [Zalewski, 1995, pp. 348-350]. They have criticised radical differences between women and men, reflected in peacebuilding. Today, it is a common thesis among feminist researchers that a person's biological sex does not determine their propensity for war or peace; instead, it is their worldview, political beliefs, and societal gender systems that shape this propensity. The key point in analysing gender as a socially constructed category of masculinity and femininity is that "there is nothing natural, inherent, or biologically inevitable about the attributes, activities, and behaviours that come to be defined as either masculine or feminine" [Zalewski, 1995, p. 341]. If we consider gender as a socially and culturally constructed product, then war can be seen as a factor that influences its formation and vice versa. Beliefs about gender differences play a role in creating the realities of war. For instance, Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott, argue that gender is produced, reproduced, and perpetuated in society. They assert that war is a phenomenon in which the division of labour by gender becomes most evident after biological reproduction, creating gender differences that seem "absolute, inevitable, and natural" [Zalewski, 1995, pp. 349-350].

3.2 The Impact of Armed Conflicts On Women

During military conflicts, the differences between men and women become especially noticeable. This idea has also been reflected in historical perspectives, where history, including the history of wars, has been predominantly viewed and reproduced from a male-centric standpoint. In addition, much of contemporary literature, film, and other forms of art and mass communication still focus primarily on men's involvement in the conflict, often portraying women solely as victims or observers [Shekhawat, 2015, pp.1-4]. To some extent, this

perception is accurate, as a significant number of women find themselves in challenging circumstances during wars, such as: becoming the sole breadwinner (if their husbands are fighting or have been killed in action); being forcibly mobilised into the army; facing medical or social vulnerabilities (if the state tends to prioritise militarisation over health, education, infrastructure, and social security); organising to search for missing relatives during the war; becoming refugees or temporarily displaced persons; becoming victims of domestic violence (research confirming an increase in domestic violence levels during escalated societal violence), etc [Karam, 2000].

Hence, intra-state and inter-state confrontations often lead to significant changes in women's lives, impacting them in various ways. However, attempting to generalise and provide characteristics of exclusively women's problems is impossible. The location and nature of the issues, the geographical context of the armed conflict, the applicable laws, the level of human rights protection in specific countries, and whether women are actively or passively involved in the conflict all play a role [Karam, 2000, pp. 3-6].

In the following sections, this dissertation will explore examples of women's active participation during wartime, encompassing both hard power and soft power.

3.3 Women's Hard Power in Wartime

The discussion surrounding women's propensity for violence as opposed to peace is still a marginal discourse in society. However, women have been playing crucial roles on the battlefield despite war being predominantly associated with men. Women are involved in various vital capacities in military operations, serving as combatants, leaders, intelligence gatherers, logistics managers, and medics. Their contributions are essential for the success of military missions, yet they often go unrecognised [Darden, 2015]. Recent studies have shown that women's involvement in violent acts has increased both in quantity and quality since the Second World War. Women now join the regular army in roles where they perform support functions and directly participate in combat operations on the front lines. Women from the regular military are increasingly visible in interstate wars. For instance, in Liberia, some women have even become war leaders, and there are also examples of women founding and leading militant groups there [Navas, 2007, p. 11]. Also, since the start of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, there has been a significant increase in the number of women serving in the army. Ukrainian society widely accepts that both men and women can defend the

country. As of March 2024, the Ukrainian Armed Forces consist of over 62,000 women [The Official Website of Ukraine, 2024]. Some military women have gained recognition as influencers or have been promoted to higher ranks. Personal recruitment has been made possible by focusing on an individual's experience rather than just military background. This change has enabled women with military education but no prior knowledge to attain senior positions in the army [ArmWomenNow, 2022].

3.4 Women's Soft Power in Wartime

Women often exert political influence through non-coercive means, which can also be considered a part of soft power. In the context of women's activities during a war or post-conflict period, examples of soft power can be seen in various forms:

- Cultural and Symbolic Influence: Women can mobilise around their roles as caregivers and nurturers to argue against the destruction and violence associated with militarization.
- Domestic and International Advocacy: Women can influence international relations and military policies through non-governmental organisations (NGOs), advocacy groups, and diplomatic efforts that emphasise cooperation, human rights, and peaceful conflict resolution.
- Peace Movements: Women can be activists or join or set up peace movements, relying on the soft power of persuasion, moral authority, and the ability to build coalitions across different sectors of society [Enloe, 2014, pp. 174-210; pp. 305-342].

The role of women in post-conflict settings is also crucial, particularly in communication between conflicting parties. Mediation is one of the critical methods used in conflict resolution, characterised by collaboration, participation, informality, and non-binding processes [Manning, 2010]. Women often excel in this role due to their understanding of the challenges faced by marginalised groups, such as discrimination. They also demonstrate a firm grasp of the dynamics within different identity groups, including gender, ethnicity, race, and socioeconomic background. Furthermore, women are often more emotionally sensitive to addressing the psychological trauma caused by conflicts, making them valuable participants in mediation processes [De Langis, 2011, pp. 2-4].

African countries like Somalia and Kenya offer insightful lessons in the effective involvement of women in mediation processes. Women in these countries have united across tribal and ethnic divides and political affiliations to play active roles in mediation. By taking a solid civic stance and establishing partnerships with public organisations, women have risen to prominent positions in mediation processes. In Somalia, for instance, the use of poetry as a mediation tool has been successful, contributing to women's participation in mediation and allocating 12% of parliamentary seats to women. This example highlights women's ability to leverage culturally significant tools to advocate for their rights and mediate conflicts within their societies [Sugh & Ikwuba, 2017, pp.1-4].

Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach in detail. It discusses sample selection, introduces the participants, and provides relevant information about the interview procedures. Additionally, it explains the steps involved in the data analysis process.

1. Qualitative research design

The practical part of this study employed a qualitative approach. This method was chosen because the thesis explores complex social and cultural phenomena, specifically women's art and its role during the war. The qualitative approach enabled the collection of detailed, personal narratives representing each woman's unique experience. Given that the research delved into deeply personal stories and projects, quantitative data would not have been able to capture the depth of their creativity and impact accurately. The research uses an inductive approach to understand a phenomenon by analysing data. I chose an inductive approach for this dissertation because it allows for a detailed study of the experiences of women artists during the war without pre-formed hypotheses. As Bryman points out, a minimally structured interview has excellent potential for eliciting essential aspects that the researcher might otherwise miss. Therefore, within the framework of the interviews, this approach allowed the data to "speak for itself", enabling me to identify themes and patterns that emerged naturally from the participants' responses. This is especially important for exploring complex, subjective experiences and understanding how women interpret their role in society during wartime. [Bryman, 2012].

2. Sample

2.1 Sample Method

The sample selection for the study involved three methods: Purposive Sampling, Snowball Sampling, and Homogeneous Sampling. These methods were chosen because they allowed for a targeted search for suitable participants. Purposive sampling was particularly helpful in selecting women artists with specific war-related experiences from the beginning. For example, it allowed me to focus on those who, in one way or another, connected their professional or amateur artistic activities with the theme of war, making it possible to

concentrate on those most relevant to this study. Additionally, Snowball Sampling helped me to recruit more participants by getting referrals from previous interviewees using their personal connections and social networks. Furthermore, Homogeneous Sampling allowed to focus on participants with similar professional (several participants per art form) or social (engaged in socially important projects during the war) characteristics, making thematic analysis easier.

2.2 Presentation of the Respondents

To better understand the profile of the respondents, this paragraph will briefly describe the activities of the interviewed women, their place of residence, and how the war impacted their lives. The interview involved ten Ukrainian women affected by the Russian-Ukrainian war. Each participant has experience working with artistic practices and projects of significant social importance during wartime. Women were specifically chosen for the interview as the study aimed to focus on the contributions made by women through art projects. It was also essential to explore the internal motivation of women in choosing socially significant roles and their unique experiences in project implementation.

Participant 1 experienced the war in Kyiv and left Ukraine on the first day. She has been living in Estonia since then. Despite living in another country, Participant 1 maintains close ties to Ukraine and considers it her civic duty to help Ukraine in various ways. As a result, she took on the role of heading the communication department of the Association of Ukrainian Organizations in Estonia. This organisation focuses on promoting Ukrainian culture abroad, bringing together Ukrainian refugees, and volunteering to assist war victims. Over two years working with the Association, she has organised numerous projects, including national Ukrainian art events, performances by Ukrainian musicians, poets, writers, and cultural figures, and screenings of Ukrainian films for Estonians. The association has limited public funding from the Estonian state, so Participant 1 voluntarily undertakes media support and public relations work.

Participant 2 is a cultural studies researcher and a Center for Mediation and Dialogue research associate. She is also the author of an online course on conflict management. She lives in Ukraine and is involved in social and scientific projects aimed at promoting Ukrainian art and culture globally. In addition, she hosts a YouTube channel where she interviews cultural

figures on important socio-political topics during the war. Participant 2 is also the author of the well-known book "(Un)Conscious Art" in Ukraine, which includes interviews with masters of Ukrainian fine art and young socially engaged artists. The book became a bestseller in the largest network of Ukrainian bookstores. Its main goal was to collect artistic reflections of the period from the Revolution of Dignity (2013) to the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Russia, during which the artists shared their vision of the role of art and artists in a conflict environment.

Participant 3 works at a book publishing house focused on art. Her responsibilities include organising new book presentations, creating unique product offers, and communicating with editors and bloggers for marketing. She is also involved in theatre projects as an amateur actor, scriptwriter, and playwright. Additionally, she takes on the roles of producer and director, organising cultural projects such as poetry collections. She lives in Ukraine and has no plans to leave the country.

Participant 4 is an illustrator and artist who primarily works in book design. She also creates paintings and graphics, using techniques such as linocut and ink. Although she initially had reservations about academic art during her studies, her interest in painting has grown. Currently, she is working on a series of war-themed paintings. She lives in Ukraine and is actively involved in artistic activities, reflecting on personal and social experiences of war.

Participant 5 is a student at two universities: Ostroh Academy (majoring in journalism) and Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (studying Ukrainian philology). She is actively involved in theatre activities and serves as a manager in the "Theatrical Platform" organisation. One of her productions, "My Fatigue," focuses on the civilian life of Ukrainians during the war. She also participates in charity events supporting the military, particularly her father, who serves in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Participant 6 is the art museum director in Kropyvnytskyi, Ukraine. Since the start of the Russian aggression in 2014, the museum has been actively involved in patriotic and volunteer activities under Participant 6's leadership. They have organised exhibitions, made camouflage nets, and held charity auctions to support hospitals and the military. Following the full-scale invasion in 2022, the museum expanded its efforts, providing art therapy for soldiers

in hospitals and organising workshops for displaced individuals and families of fallen soldiers. They also focus on working with children and the spouses of fallen defenders.

Participant 7 is a poet and illustrator who resides in Ukraine. She has published four poetry collections, each touching on the theme of war to some extent. Her latest book has a unique structure, with the poems written as prose. Besides her poetry, she also illustrates books, often collaborating with publishing houses through state grants. She frequently participates in presentations of her works in Ukraine and abroad, particularly in Austria. In her free time, Participant 7 volunteers by helping to find scarce drugs for cancer patients and rescuing cats. She takes the cats home, treats them, and looks for new owners.

Participant 8 works at a Ukrainian mediation centre and frequently collaborates with universities, serving as a judge at student debates. She is a journalist by profession and has experience working in the media industry and with documentaries. Discovering the significance of using cinematography as a tool to find common ground between conflicting parties was a pivotal moment in her mediation work. Participant 8 intends to continue exploring the integration of artistic practices in mediation processes. She resides in Ukraine and has no plans to relocate.

Participant 9 is the communications manager of a project that showcases Ukrainian films in Great Britain. She left Ukraine after the Russian occupation of the Donetsk region in 2014 and has been living in Britain since then. Following the start of the full-scale invasion in 2024, she became more actively involved in volunteer projects to assist Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees.

Participant 10 is an artist and public activist from Kyiv. She trains and writes instructional manuals for children, focusing on the development of communication skills and creative thinking through interactive cards. After testing in various educational institutions, the Ministry of Education of Ukraine approved her cards. She also authorises children's books and organises cultural events, including literary evenings. She actively promotes Ukrainian culture abroad and supports environmental initiatives.

3. Data collection procedure

3.1 Interviews

Interviews containing open-ended research questions were chosen as the research method. This method was chosen because it allowed participants to express their views independently without being guided or influenced by specific questions [Bryman, 2012]. The interviews were conducted individually using the Teams platform. Ukrainian was the language of communication for all interviews. The conversations were recorded, saved on the University Office 365 system's OneDrive Cloud storage, and later transcribed. The topics and questions were prepared in advance because all interview participants shared common characteristics. They were of the same gender, had a direct or indirect connection to art, and were victims of a military conflict. However, the unstructured interview had its limitations. Each participant could only focus on a limited number of project details, which may have had significant socio-political importance but could be considered less relevant for this study. The differences in the focus of each interview sometimes made it difficult to compare responses, which created challenges for data analysis. As an interviewer, I had to adapt quickly by choosing questions according to the context, which increased the risk of missing important information or misinterpreting it. However, this approach allowed the participants to independently identify important topics, which was a priority in studying the role of artistic activity in the context of soft power.

3.2 Pilot study

For the pilot interview, two participants were selected through purposive sampling. The interviews were conducted with Participant 1, who was actively involved in socially essential art projects outside Ukraine during the war, and Participant 3, who works in a book publishing house in Ukraine. The pilot study aimed to test the interview structure, clarify the questions, and assess the respondents' reactions to open-ended questions. It was essential to determine whether the questions needed to be adjusted based on how the war had affected the respondents, depending on whether they were in a country currently at war or abroad. This is because the topic of war is very sensitive and can have different effects on individuals in war-torn areas and those in safe territories.

Two interviews were conducted via video link, allowing the participants the space to express themselves. The interviews were unstructured, enabling me to observe the topics' natural emergence. After the interviews, it became clear that some questions needed further clarification. For instance, the topic of social roles during the war generated significant interest among the participants. Both participants expressed great concern and even shame (my interpretation of their words and emotional response) about not serving. They had different perspectives on their social roles during the war, but they both began discussing what they would do if they were not involved in socially important art projects.

Therefore, the pilot study helped identify specific important aspects of the study and influenced its structure. With their input, it was possible to improve the interview process, adapt the questions, and better understand how participants with different experiences perceive the process. This confirmed the importance of open-ended questions for an in-depth study of the personal experiences of women artists.

3.3 Qualitative Data Analysis Plan

Three methods—thematic analysis, narrative analysis, and phenomenology—were used to analyse women's testimonies in the interviews. The rationale for choosing these methods will be provided below.

Thematic analysis was chosen for this dissertation due to its flexibility in exploring complex qualitative data related to women's artistic initiatives during wartime. This method allowed me to gain a deep understanding of participants' perspectives, capturing the meanings they ascribe to their experiences in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. It was particularly effective for identifying patterns and themes that illustrate how art can serve as a form of social and political expression. While analysing the transcriptions and notes, I used this analysis to search for similar topics. This process involved several steps. Firstly, I carefully read through the interview transcripts. Then, I highlighted key phrases or ideas related to the research questions in each interview. After that, I grouped similar codes to identify common themes and patterns. Finally, I combined the thematic blocks and analysed them in relation to the research questions [Braun & Clarke, 2006].

Narrative analysis was chosen because it focuses on how people tell their stories and the meanings they attach to their experiences. This method is beneficial for researching life

stories or significant events in people's lives and allows for a deeper understanding of contexts and cultural aspects. In this study, narrative analysis helped me to explore how women describe and interpret their experience of being involved in art projects during the war through their stories. Oral history, a variation of narrative analysis, was used to collect "personal reflections of events and their causes and effects" from several women artists [Creswell, 2013, pp. 71-73].

Phenomenology was chosen as one of the approaches for interview analysis because this method focuses on understanding the essence of human experience from the participant's perspective. It seeks to understand how people experience specific events or situations at a deep level by studying their conscious experiences. I focused on common themes or "essences" shared by all participants to uncover the essence of the phenomenon under study. In this study, phenomenology made it possible to understand how women artists perceived their experiences during the war. It helped identify common elements in their experiences, such as how the war affected their creativity and societal roles, what motivated them to choose specific social roles, and how they experienced audience feedback on their projects or creativity. This approach allowed me to explore the deep feelings behind the art the interviewees talked about and show how it becomes a potential expression of soft power in wartime conditions [Creswell, 2013, pp. 76-79].

4. Methodological Challenges and Ethical Considerations

4.1 Limitations of Study

As with any qualitative study, this dissertation has several significant limitations that were considered when interpreting the results. Here are some key aspects that limit the research:

1. Sensitivity of the Research Topic

Researching the topic of women's art in the context of war is particularly sensitive. Many of the participants have experienced severe emotional and social trials due to the military conflict. Most participants have close or distant relatives or friends on the front lines. Additionally, the topic of war intersects with patriotism, civic duty, and political preferences, among other things. Therefore, many interviews contained deep personal reflections and experiences, which affected the participants' emotional state during the interview. This emotional impact could limit the openness of some respondents or, conversely, cause excessive

emotionality, which affected the structure of the answers. Respondents talked about the loss of loved ones, the traumatic experiences of war, and their artistic attempts to cope with these experiences. This emotionality, while ensuring the authenticity of the data, could affect the concentration of the participants and their ability to think deeply about the questions. Some respondents may have been so overwhelmed by emotions that their answers were fragmented or incomplete. In such cases, my task as a researcher and interviewer was to provide emotional support and respect the personal boundaries of the respondents.

2. Sample size (Sample Size)

Another limitation of the study is the small sample size. The research specifically focuses on conducting a detailed investigation of the experiences of women artists during the war. To achieve this, I limited the sample to ten participants to thoroughly analyse their responses. While this approach provided rich and personalised data, it also restricted the ability to generalise the results to a broader population. A study with a larger sample size could have produced more diverse results, but it was not practical to adopt such an approach due to time constraints.

3. Geographical and cultural limitations

The study sample mainly consisted of women living in Ukraine or within the Ukrainian cultural context. This may limit the generalizability of the results to other regions or countries. Considering the theoretical framework, we believe art can be used as a form of soft power. However, the experiences of female artists from Ukraine during conflict may differ from those of women artists in other parts of the world, where military conflicts have different forms or consequences or have different cultural characteristics. Applying the results to a global context makes it challenging but possible.

4. The influence of the subjectivity of respondents

Considering that the respondents' answers are based on their subjective experiences and interpretations of reality is essential. Their emotional state and individual views may have influenced how they described their artistic projects and social roles during the war. This also means that the interpretation of the data is limited by the subjectivity of the participants, which may not fully reflect the objective reality.

Despite these limitations, the study provides an important contribution to understanding the role of women artists during the war and their influence through art as a potential soft power.

4.2 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are critical in research that covers war-related topics and women's artistic activities, as they often involve sensitive and emotionally complex issues. Therefore, I studied the UWTSD Research Integrity and Ethics Policy before conducting the research. According to them, my research had to undergo an ethical review and approval process to ensure the University's research is carried out in the public interest and is lawful under the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act [UWTSD Research Data Management Policy, 2022; UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice, 2022]. To do this, I applied for ethical approval (the application is in the Appendices section) and received approval from the ethics committee to conduct the study. Here are some key ethical considerations that were considered when conducting this research.

- Informed consent

I followed ethical guidelines to ensure the potential interview participants provided informed consent. I provided potential interviewees with a Research Ethics Information Form on OneDrive cloud storage provided by the University Office 365 system. This form includes details on the purpose, methods, benefits, risks, and potential discomfort associated with the study. Additionally, the form stated that participation in the interview was voluntary and that participants could withdraw their consent at any time. The information form also outlined the other conditions for the interview as specified by the UWTSD Research Ethics. Finally, at the end of the form, potential participants were asked to confirm that they had read and understood the rules and consent to processing their personal data.

- Confidentiality and Anonymity

The participants were informed about the data protection measures and guidelines for safeguarding their personal information. To ensure information security, all communication related to the research was conducted through the official university email. Interviews were recorded on the Teams platform, and the survey data were saved on the protected OneDrive Cloud storage, part of the University's Office 365 system. To protect the personal data of all participants, their names have been deleted or replaced with numbers (for example, "Participant number 1, 2, 3, etc."). All collected data were stored in an encrypted form and were accessible only to the researcher.

- The emotional sensitivity of the topic

Since the interviews dealt with complex and traumatic topics such as war, measures were taken to ensure the emotional well-being of the respondents. The interviews were conducted in a comfortable format, and the participants were allowed to refuse any question or end the conversation at any time.

- Access to psychological support

If the interview could cause emotional stress or traumatic memories, the participants received information about available resources for psychological support. This minimised the negative consequences for their mental health.

- Voluntary participation

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants could withdraw their consent at any stage without any consequences. This was important to ensure a sense of control and security on the part of the respondents.

- Fair presentation of data

All interviews were conducted to gather the most authentic and accurate testimonies of women artists about their projects and experiences during the war. I avoided imposing my views or influencing the participants' answers. All conclusions and recommendations are based on the analysis of their own words and experiences, ensuring the data's objectivity and reliability.

- Ethical responsibility for the use of data

Given the social and political situation, the collected data can influence public policy or the public. Therefore, the study considered the importance of ethical responsibility for presenting results and their further use. Any recommendations to the government or society are based on the interests of the participants and the responsible use of their expertise.

In such a way, this study ensured compliance with all ethical standards, including confidentiality, voluntary participation, and sensitivity to the subject's emotional aspects. This ensures that the results are ethically justified.

Chapter IV: Interview Results Analysis and Discussion

1. Analysis of the Results

Analysis of results is divided into two parts. Each part answers one of the research questions.

1.1 What Socially Important Roles Do Women Artists Play During Wartime?

This research question aimed to determine the primary social mission of women artists during the war. The pilot study indicated that women viewed participation in military actions or related activities as a civic duty for all Ukrainians, irrespective of gender. As a researcher, I needed to comprehend women's motivations for fulfilling specific social roles and the obstacles hindering their participation in socially significant activities.

1.1.1 Socially Important Roles that Include Hard Power

Participant No. 3 mentioned that in addition to her intellectual work, she would like to receive training as a paramedic. She stated that the main obstacle to pursuing this goal is the presence of her 3-year-old child, whom she is raising alone. She expressed her internal struggle, saying, "For a long time, I was tormented by the thought that I was not doing enough. If we do not protect ourselves, no one will. However, the child is the main thing that holds me back. It's not the fear of death or the fear of difficulties, but simply that I have no right to die because I am a woman and I have a child."

On the first day of the war, Participant No. 4 applied to register in the military. However, the military units were filled with men at the beginning of hostilities, so she was not considered. Over two years of the war, she managed to take medical courses from the Red Cross and improve her health and physical fitness in the gym. She said, "I feel that one day I will understand that my time to defend my country has come, and I must go to fight, and maybe the moment will come when no one will ask me anymore. I want to be mentally and physically ready for both scenarios."

Participant No. 7 is involved in two volunteer activities: searching for rare medicines for the military and rescuing animals from areas where hostilities occur. Since many private companies dealing with rare medicines left the Ukrainian market after the start of hostilities, the search for these medicines became difficult. Therefore, Participant No. 7, along with other volunteers, delivers the found medicines and rescues animals that are stranded without owners in life-threatening areas. She mentioned that she came under fire several times.

Participant No. 8 expressed absolute readiness to participate in military operations if necessary and took medical courses. Additionally, she took part in the filming of a documentary about the war. She went to the territories close to the front line with a film crew to do this. According to the participant, military journalism is very dangerous and can lead to fatal consequences.

1.1.2 Socially Important Roles that Include Soft Power

Participant No. 1 stated that her leading social role was working in the diplomatic sphere and promoting the Ukrainian cultural code abroad. She explained that the projects she works on are the tools she uses to unite and support Ukrainians and to share Ukrainian narratives about the war in Estonia through culture and art.

Participant No. 2 considers her primary social mission during the war to be mediation, scientific work, and preserving Ukrainian culture, including involvement in archiving Ukrainian women's art. He expressed concern that Ukrainian art is under threat due to the war, as a significant number of paintings, sculptures, and other essential artefacts have already been destroyed by rockets.

Participant No. 8 also emphasised that mediation is her primary social role, especially in fostering understanding between Ukrainians with different political views after the end of hostilities.

Participant No. 4, who was not registered with the military at the beginning of the war, decided to engage in art and promote socially important topics through her paintings, which were presented at exhibitions.

Participant No. 5 identified herself as a storyteller and broadcaster of events in Ukraine through theatrical art. Additionally, after completing her studies, she plans to join urban planning projects to adapt the surrounding space for people with disabilities, who are increasingly affected by the country's military operations.

Participants Nos. 3, 6, and 9's leading social roles involve helping war victims through charitable artistic events, organising artistic events to boost patriotic spirit, and sharing the real stories of war victims through art projects.

1.2 How can women artists influence wartime social, political, and cultural outcomes?

Interviewees discussed their art-related projects or their direct artistic activities. Each participant selected the project she believed was socially significant during the war and could potentially impact wartime social, political, and cultural outcomes.

1.2.1 Mediation

Cultural activist and mediator Participant No. 2 discussed an experiment involving a mediation sketch on the topic of a military conflict, incorporating artistic practices. The experiment engaged 350 people from various regions of Ukraine and immigrants from territories occupied and annexed by Russia after 2014. Participants used visual images to answer questions, such as describing how they perceive themselves in a conflict, how they view others in conflict, and how they think others perceive them in conflict.

After gathering feedback two weeks later, Participant No. 2 discovered that most participants rated their emotional state as either significantly improved or worse after the experiment. "I concluded that individuals who had not directly witnessed the hostilities experienced an improved emotional state, as art provided them a means to express themselves. Conversely, those who had undergone traumatic experiences during the conflict in the past experienced a worsening of their emotional state due to re-traumatisation," explained Participant No. 2.

This experiment aimed to facilitate interaction between Ukrainians who had and had not experienced war trauma and foster mutual understanding. This process is crucial for

reintegrating territories, as it necessitates fostering connections between individuals with differing ideological perspectives and cultural backgrounds.

"My most significant conclusion from the experiment is that the better a person understands themselves, the better they can understand others. In the context of conflict, this implies that the more people know themselves, the more capable they are of reconciliation and finding common ground with their adversaries. Art emerges as a means of emotional expression and self-discovery," concluded Participant No. 2.

Mediator Participant No. 8 spoke about a case of mediation in 2020 (before the full-scale invasion of Russia) between students from different parts of Ukraine: Eastern (where hostilities were already taking place) and annexed Crimea and from other parts of Ukraine. Participant No. 8 showed the students a documentary about reconciliation through dialogue in the Balkans by the Norwegian peacemaker Steiner Brin, who spent 15 years working on reconciliation in the Balkans. After watching the film, students had a discussion and shared their impressions.

"I noticed that going through a common experience is a good boost for trust. For the first 30 minutes, everyone was saying how different we were and how unlike us it was. Then, they went deeper, discussed how the situation should have been resolved, and were ready to tell their personal stories. I saw that art is a perfect tool for involving communities in dialogue. We don't know each other at first; we don't trust each other. For example, a joint trip to an exhibition, a theatrical event, or a movie gives us something to discuss. After we feel safer, we are more ready to move away from clichés and start talking about ourselves. I'm a big believer in personal stories because if we exchange our political statements, they can always be denied. For one cliché, there is always another cliché. And personal history cannot be denied," said Participant No. 8.

1.2.2 Curation of Art Projects

Participant No. 1, the communications director of the Association of Ukrainian Organizations in Estonia, told two stories about organising the annual Festival of Folk Art, which started after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The event aimed to show Estonians Ukrainian traditions and folk costumes, interest Estonians in Ukrainian culture, and create a platform for intercultural dialogue.

The festival gathered more than 2,000 people, most of whom were Estonians. The 2024 festival included Japanese, Poles, Lithuanians, Turks, and Armenians. Estonians showed great interest in the event because Ukraine and Estonia's national clothes and traditions have much in common. Part of the funds collected during the event were donated to charity for war victims. The Estonian Integration Fund and the Estonian Ministry of Culture recognised this event in 2023 as the best integration project of the year.

The second large-scale project of Participant No. 1 was the opening of the Ukrainian-language radio station "Radio Druzi" in Estonia. According to her, opening a Ukrainian-language radio station is an essential step in cultural diplomacy because Ukrainian-language content in Estonia is an opportunity to spread Ukrainian narratives and "counteract Russian propaganda." This radio is a way to help Ukrainians consume Ukrainian-language, not Russian-language content, which is still widespread in Estonia.

The director of the Museum of Art, Participant No. 6, spoke about the "United Ukraine" project, organised by the museum team in 2014 (the year considered the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war due to Russia's annexation of the Crimean peninsula). Artists who cooperate with the museum joined in creating large posters, the meaning of which was to convey that Crimea is Ukraine. Many people joined the mass demonstration, and after the posters were moved to the museum, the exhibition became the most visited in a long time.

After the full-scale invasion, the Museum organised a similar project called "My Name is Ukraine". This time, the posters' images were hung on big boards, and the project was reported on the country's leading TV channels.

1.2.3 Cinematography

Participant No. 1, the communications director of the Association of Ukrainian Organizations in Estonia, initiated the screening of Ukrainian films for Ukrainian refugees.

In 2023, the Association became a partner of the Ukrainian "Culture vs War" project. This project aims to introduce foreign audiences to the values of Ukrainian culture through the stories of artists who have left their usual lives to support Ukraine. The project's main component is a series of documentaries in which Ukrainian musicians, cinematographers, writers, photographers, and other cultural figures share their personal stories and memories related to the war.

"For Ukrainians in Estonia, these films have become a vital source of strength. Our people need something to inspire them to continue living and to believe in our victory. One of the refugees told me that thanks to our events, she regained her zest for life and rediscovered her love for her country, which painful memories had overshadowed. For Estonians, Ukrainian cinema and cultural figures have been a revelation. After the film screenings, interest in Ukrainian singers, writers, and other artists increased significantly," Participant No. 1 said.

Participant No. 9's activities primarily focus on a project related to showcasing Ukrainian-made films in Great Britain. Most movie screenings take place in small settings in rented venues and are presented in English. Additionally, Participant 9 has organised large-scale film screenings at the academic centre of the University of Cambridge and the Cinacity Film Festival in Brighton, where Ukrainian films were featured.

"For me, the most important goal is to promote Ukrainian culture among the British. I believe that with each new event, the interest in film screenings is growing. The British audience is becoming more familiar with Ukrainian films and our historical events, which is very gratifying," she says.

1.2.4 Theatrical Art

Participant No. 5, a theatrical director, directed a play depicting the civilian war experience. The central theme of the performance was the impact of war on civilians. The director aimed to convey the challenges faced by civilians during rocket attacks, the injuries they sustain, and how they strive to maintain a sense of normalcy during wartime. English-speaking students and amateur actors were involved in the play to reach a wider non-Ukrainian-speaking audience. The theatre troupe performed the play three times in Poland.

"I wanted people to truly feel the emotions and experiences we were trying to convey. The experience of living through war is unique, and it's very challenging for people from other European countries to comprehend it. However, I believe we succeeded. During the second performance, many people were moved to tears. There was even a woman whose sobs sometimes overshadowed the actors on stage. It was a deeply emotional experience," said Participant No. 5.

1.2.5 Art Exhibitions

Participant No. 6, the director of the Art Museum, organised a project to support the wives of fallen soldiers as part of the All-Ukrainian project "Alive. A true love story." The Art Museum invited 15 women, the wives of fallen soldiers, to a 6-month drawing training. The drawing lessons were conducted by invited artists, including Participant No. 6. After the training, each widow created artwork reflecting the emotions she experienced due to losing her partner. Paintings from various cities of Ukraine were showcased in an exhibition that attracted many visitors. The project received coverage in European, American, and Arab media outlets.

According to Participant No. 6, this project served not only a therapeutic and educational purpose but also helped shed light on the pain experienced by women in Ukraine, thereby reminding people around the world about the harsh realities of life in Ukraine.

Illustrator and artist Participant No. 4 participated in an art exhibition in Kyiv focusing on military themes. Participant No. 4's paintings were dedicated to portraying the loneliness those on the battlefield felt. The main objective of her works was to convey to Ukrainians the emotions experienced by soldiers in combat and to remind residents of cities where rocket attacks are rare about the horrors faced in other parts of the country.

The participant's experience led her to these reflections: "My father is currently serving at the front. When he was hospitalised due to an injury, he said to me over the phone, 'I will recover, and I want to return. I love you and our mother, but someone has to be there.' According to the participant, art will always find its audience and help individuals understand and empathise with the multifaceted pain of war.

1.2.6 The Publishing of Books on Artistic Subjects

An influence manager, Participant No. 3, from a book publishing house, focused on art and discussed working on advertising for the "Debris" collection, which explores the experiences of women who lost their husbands in the war. The collection was initially presented at a festival in Kyiv and later translated into English and Polish. It is available in stores in Poland, Lithuania, and the Czech Republic. "Our publishing house actively gathers poetry about war and has been recruiting new illustrators for collections for over a year. Our team has brought together a community of specialists, including editors, writers, and cultural figures. We have

received feedback that books and collections about art help to provide distraction, support, and empathy," she said.

Participant No. 7, a poet and illustrator, shared her experience presenting her book. Her four collections of poems depict the events of the Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine in 2013 and the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022.

She mentioned that the most potent response to her poetry came from Austrians rather than Ukrainians in 2023. Participant No. 7 held a presentation of the collection in Vienna, which the director of a local publishing house attended. After the presentation, she received a letter from him with an offer to sign a contract to sell her collection in Vienna. The collection was then translated into German and appeared on the shelves of Viennese bookstores.

"I believe the strong response from the Austrian audience was due to their current high interest in Ukrainian poetry. Either I was in the right place at the right time, or the events in Ukraine truly cannot leave people indifferent," said Participant No. 7.

Cultural activist and mediator Participant No. 2 shared her impressions of the interview results in her book "Unconscious Art." The book includes interviews with masters of Ukrainian fine art and young artists (more information about the book is described in the "Presentation of the respondents" section).

"It turned out that those artists who claimed in the interview that they did not address the topic of war unconsciously demonstrated public consciousness in their works. This seemed so significant to me that it gave the title to the entire book. This was one of my goals - to make artists think about the importance of their work socially," said Participant No. 2. As she claims, "artists who record the rupture of the present leave artefacts for future cultural archaeologists and make a significant contribution to the formation of Ukraine's history."

An artist from Kyiv, Participant No. 10, has authorised a linguistic and poetic art book that includes visual art, poetry, and translations into foreign languages. The project aimed to promote Ukrainian culture internationally through language and poetry, allowing foreign readers to engage with Ukrainian texts and gain a deeper understanding of Ukrainian identity. The art book features poems and artistic illustrations that convey emotions related to war, hope, and cultural revival. It has been translated into Polish, German, and English, and copies are being sold in Ireland and Poland.

1.3 Does the State Support Socially Important Art Initiatives During Wartime?

The participants discussed the level of support that artistic activities or projects receive from the state, including financial, organisational, educational, media, and other types of support. The aim was to gain women's perspective on whether Ukraine was interested in supporting artists during the war and whether it used artists as soft power to promote its war narratives abroad and within the country.

1.3.1 State Support of Artistic Projects of the Participants

Participant No. 1, communications director of the Association of Ukrainian Organizations in Estonia, said that all projects in Estonia are organised 90% with their funds. Two people are involved in the organisation of projects, so Participant No. 1 acts mainly as a manager, presenter and writer on social networks. In 2024, the Organization was allocated funds from the Ministry of Culture and the Integration Fund of Estonia so that the Organization could make the Festival of Folk Arts more powerful and attract representatives of different nationalities to it because Estonia celebrates the year of cultural diversity and richness of cultures in 2024. The organisation is actively looking for financial and human resources and opportunities for support, particularly from Ukraine.

Cultural activist and mediator Participant No. 2 noted that she carried out most dialogue initiatives and mediation cases with micro-grants from an American organisation from the university where she received her doctoral degree. This organisation is a network of university graduates. Mainly, with the help of connections from this organisation, she manages to find premises, equipment, etc. In particular, it received funding from the German grant program and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. This program provided funding for the filming of a dispute resolution course. Also, several Ukrainian NGOs provide premises and allow her to contact the people they cooperate with for free. However, according to Participant No. 2, during the war, the state should direct the budget to armaments and not to artistic or mediation initiatives, so she did not seek support from the Ukrainian state during the war.

Influence manager of a book publishing house about art. Participant No. 3 was involved in many artistic media projects that had funding from the Media Development Foundation (Center for the Development of Independent Media in Ukraine), which receives financial assistance from USAID (USA) and the non-profit, non-governmental platform of cultural initiatives "Isolation Fund" from the European Union. The publishing house also received media support from the state.

Illustrator and artist Participant No. 4 said that as an artist, she always participated only in private exhibitions and her closest circle of artists she knew never received state support for art projects. "As an artist, I consider it my social responsibility to express a pro-Ukrainian position in my work, and in my opinion, financing such messages should benefit the state," Participant No. 4 believes.

Mediator Participant No. 8 stated that she took part in the filming of a documentary about the war, the funds for which were allocated by the state. However, according to her, this case is rare because state funds are directed to the country's defence industry. The private mediation centre where she works supports all other activities, including mediation.

Poet and illustrator Participant No. 7 noted that most of the illustrations for the books were government orders. Book publishers won grants from the Ukrainian Cultural Fund and thus had funding for illustrators. The projects of the theatre Director, Participant No. 5, and the Art Museum Director, Participant No. 6, also have mostly government funding, as their projects are primarily related to government institutions. In particular, they received media and organisational support from the state.

Manager of cultural projects in Britain, Participant No. 9 regularly hosts film screenings funded by Ukrainian businesses in Britain. However, she confirmed that she was also involved in several projects organised by the state institution "Ukrainian Institute."

Participant No. 10, an artist and public activist from Kyiv, expressed that obtaining state support for her projects has been challenging. She has faced difficulties getting her books published by publishing houses, as they often rejected her work, claiming it was irrelevant. Participant No. 10 resorted to crowdfunding through social networks to raise funds for a

linguistic and poetic art book. After reaching the required amount, she invested the funds into printing the book.

2. Discussion of Findings

The study aimed to explore and analyse the role of women artists in shaping social, political, and cultural narratives during times of war. It focused on understanding how art created by women can act as a form of soft power to impact wartime society and outcomes.

The study aimed to answer three research questions. The first was to explore *the socially important roles women artists played during wartime*. The interviews confirmed the theoretical framework of this study, which suggested that war has a different impact on women's lives. Among the women, some were forced to leave the country, raise a child on their own because the husband was at war, learn medical care skills, etc. Also, all the women noted that the war gave them the impetus to be activists and make significant contributions to helping people and the country. The interviews revealed that women artists are actively involved in both soft and challenging power activities, as they consider it their civic and personal duty. Next, the study will examine women's various social roles during the war.

To begin with, it's essential to consider the roles that involve soft power. I argue that women artists play a crucial role as mediators and cultural ambassadors during wartime. Their artistic and cultural endeavours document the human cost of war, act as a soft power that influences political and cultural narratives, and contribute to understanding between conflicting parties. Engaging with the Ukrainian-Russian war's emotional, social, and political realities, they help shape both domestic and international perceptions of the conflict. I will also provide examples of women's activities to illustrate the significant social impact of their work.

All the interviewees have direct or indirect connections to art. It was important for this thesis to understand whether women used their professional or amateur art connections for important social missions during the war. The interviewed women provided examples of various projects with different scopes, directions, and target audiences. The female artists interviewed chose to engage in diplomatic, cultural, scientific, mediating, and other types of activities related to creativity. Participants highlighted activities such as promoting Ukrainian culture abroad, preserving national identity through art, and communicating Ukraine's wartime experiences to the international community. Additionally, women involved in activities related to the military sphere emphasised that their activities often inspired their artistic projects or

those of other artists. Therefore, women can use their military experience to convey feelings to the audience better than cannot be explained without experiencing war, making their work more authentic and powerful.

Most women's projects had a charitable purpose, such as collecting funds for war victims, gathering resources for medical aid, and promoting Ukrainian culture. Although the specific charitable aims were not detailed in the interview analysis, these projects are essential for further research into the social impact of women's artistic work. The women aimed to use art to unite people, share their experiences, promote Ukrainian perspectives on the conflict, and celebrate Ukrainian culture. These goals align with the concept of soft power. Since the projects were mainly self-funded, this study suggests that women independently used artistic and cultural activities as a "soft weapon" during wartime, motivated by a sense of responsibility to the state.

I will now discuss social roles that involve hard power. The social roles of the majority of the women I interviewed are not limited to cultural activities but also include various activities related to the military. This supports the study's theoretical basis, suggesting that people can choose any social role regardless of gender. Therefore, I argue that women can choose from various social roles during wartime, including those involving soft and hard power. This is supported by the fact that during the interviews, women artists assume socially important roles that involve hard power by directly participating in activities such as military volunteer work and military journalism, as evidenced by participants like Participant 7 and Participant 8. These following roles challenge traditional gender norms by illustrating women's willingness to engage in physically and emotionally demanding tasks. Participants 3 and 4 also expressed their desire to participate in military operations or acquire the necessary skills for roles they could potentially play on the front lines. Participant 3 identified the main obstacle as having a child she is raising alone. Participant 4 has already taken steps to prepare for service but considers it necessary to join the army when there is an acute shortage of men. The women cited patriotism and the desire to protect themselves and their loved ones as the primary motivation for being involved in risky professions related to the military. This demonstrates that women consciously choose between soft and hard power, reflecting a deep understanding of their significance in wartime. Some women have expressed that their involvement with the military has inspired them to create socially important art that reflects their experiences in front-line territories. As mentioned in the theoretical justification for using art as a soft power tool, it can develop new discourses and narratives. By depicting women's work experiences through art, new discourses can be made, sparking societal debates about the role of women in wartime.

Therefore, I argue that within the context of the global impact of soft power, art can shape the future social order by highlighting the diverse social roles of women during wartime.

The second research question was: "*How can women artists influence wartime social, political, and cultural outcomes?*". To explore this question, the women were interviewed about the projects they believed had the most significant social benefit during the war. Their accounts provided insight into how these projects impacted people, as evidenced by the feedback they received from the audience. As a result, I understood the practical benefits of the activities of the selected participants.

Women artists have proven their ability to significantly influence social, political, and cultural outcomes through various creative endeavours. Some participants discussed their roles in curation, mediation, and cultural diplomacy, all of which contribute to shaping public opinion, fostering dialogue, and creating platforms for understanding and reconciliation. Art projects such as theatrical performances, exhibitions, and cinematography also document and reflect wartime experiences, contributing to collective memory and cultural preservation.

The feedback from the audience shared during the interviews played a crucial role in shaping one of the main findings of this research. The stories I heard convinced me that art serves as a unique medium to engage people in experiences they have not directly encountered. Essentially, art acts as a bridge between the artist, who communicates their experiences, and the audience, who engages with and "lives" the art, consciously or unconsciously, placing themselves in the artist's shoes. As a result, art facilitates the discovery of common ground among individuals who may have been guided by different clichés, stereotypes, worldviews, beliefs, and so on. Certain art forms, such as painting, sculpture, design, and music, function as a universal language. When these art forms are presented to a foreign audience, they can be understood emotionally by individuals regardless of their native language. Therefore, in this context, the focus shifts from understanding art to feeling and experiencing emotions. The emotions evoked when interacting with art are a significant aspect of soft power. Art has the potential to prompt foreigners to empathise with or be inspired by the values, ideas, and meanings conveyed by artists from other countries, particularly in times of war. Consequently, foreigners may adopt or emulate the values "inspired" by art, seek connections with artists, and consume their artistic works (such as literature, cinema, music, etc.). This creates opportunities for collaboration between artists from different countries and fosters intercultural interactions at various levels, from professional to personal.

The dissertation argues that artistic activities have significant social importance during wartime. They help individuals cope emotionally with the war and facilitate dialogue between different groups, contributing to the formation of collective memory and fostering international understanding. Next, examples from each area where the interview participants were involved will be provided to explain this statement.

- Mediation: Artistic practices are used to resolve conflicts and reintegrate society. Projects such as sketch experiments on military conflict themes help participants process emotions and foster dialogue among people with varying war experiences, aiding in the reintegration of territories and mutual understanding.
- Curation of art projects: Cultural events promote intercultural dialogue and showcase Ukrainian culture globally, promoting necessary narratives for the state and raising awareness of the war and Ukrainian culture among foreigners.
- Cinema: War documentaries and film screenings have a significant emotional impact, inspiring war-affected Ukrainians and aiding foreigners in understanding the Ukrainian situation and human stories of the war.
- Theatrical art: Theatrical performances help international audiences emotionally connect with the Ukrainian war experience, influencing cultural perceptions and humanising the war.
- Art exhibitions: Projects, especially those reflecting military themes, draw attention to the suffering of those affected by the war and serve as a form of art therapy, reminding the world about the current reality in Ukraine.
- Publishing books on art: Books about war and art preserve collective memory and personal stories, serving as a tool of cultural diplomacy as Ukrainian publications are translated into other languages, generating interest in Ukrainian culture abroad.

The third question in the dissertation focused on *whether the state supports socially important art initiatives during wartime*. In interviews, female artists discussed the state's interest in backing art projects. Most participants talked about the state's financial assistance and organisational and media support. It's important to note that the study didn't delve into the budget allocation principles and funding amounts for the cultural sector in Ukraine, particularly during the war. The primary aim of this research question was to assess women's perspectives on the government's support for their artistic projects and its utilisation of art as a tool for international soft power.

Most participants mentioned that they are experiencing significant financial difficulties, which has led them to seek financial assistance from other countries. There appears to be limited to no state support for important art initiatives during the war, with most government resources redirected to military needs. Many participants highlighted challenges in obtaining funding and institutional support. Some interviewees, like Participant No. 1, who deals with communication issues of Ukrainian organisations in Estonia, mentioned that their work is primarily self-funded or supported by non-governmental organisations, with only partial financial support from Estonian state institutions. The example of Estonia illustrates how the state is interested in supporting national minorities, showcasing its commitment to cultural diversity. Participant No. 2 also confirmed that while some of their mediation and art projects received international funding, Ukrainian state support was minimal due to the wartime focus on defence spending.

However, there are cases of state involvement in the arts. Participant No. 7 discussed how her illustration work was supported through grants from the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation. Similarly, Participant No. 6, who works in a state-affiliated museum, mentioned receiving government funding for exhibitions related to wartime themes. This shows that, while limited, pockets of state funding are directed towards art, especially when connected with domestic art projects.

Therefore, during the interview, it was revealed that projects organised within Ukraine receive some funding and other support from the state. However, projects aimed at a foreign audience primarily do not benefit from the support of Ukraine. Still, they are organised mainly at the expense of foreign grants or the organisers' funds. It is worth noting that the distribution of state resources during the war has its specifics since the state at this time focuses all possible resources on its defence capability and maintaining the morale of its citizens. So, art as a means of soft power is primarily not used by Ukraine during the war.

However, this dissertation claims that soft power is a powerful tool of international relations in peace and conflict. Ukraine must develop and support state cultural diplomacy programs that engage artists to promote Ukrainian culture abroad and support Ukrainian society during the war. Providing financial and organisational support to artistic initiatives is essential, as they are a powerful tool for strengthening international solidarity and domestic unity.

This thesis also argues that involving women artists in state cultural diplomacy projects is essential. Through their experiences as civilians, mothers, military personnel, and cultural figures, women often have unique perspectives and feelings about war that are reflected in their work. These perspectives contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of war and can provide deeper insights into the social and cultural challenges; as stated in the

theoretical part, recognising women's contributions is a step towards achieving gender equality in government structures.

So, the discussion of the obtained results leads to the conclusion that this study has prospects for further development. First, in the future, for Ukraine and other countries currently at war, issues such as starting a dialogue and resolving differences between representatives of conflicting parties with the help of mediation practices will become urgent. This includes forming the historical narrative of the war, using necessary narratives for the country, promoting the brand of Ukraine abroad, and establishing international relations and other types related to the use of soft power. As found in this study, different forms of artistic practices can contribute to developing these directions. Therefore, the interrelationships of these directions and art require a separate detailed study.

The second issue that needs to be studied in more detail is gender. This dissertation focused on the role of women artists, whose activity has high social significance and can be used as soft power. Further research could focus on investigating the level of representation of women in state structures related to the arts and their socially important initiatives at the state level. It is also essential to explore how women's wartime art can contribute to post-war reconstruction — culturally, socially, and economically. In particular, studying the mechanisms through which the state can support artistic projects and analysing how they can be made even more influential through investments in cultural diplomacy needs special attention.

Chapter V: Conclusions

This dissertation has explored the role of Ukrainian women artists during wartime, mainly focusing on their use of art as a form of soft power to influence social, political, and cultural outcomes. Through the analysis of interviews with ten women artists, this study has highlighted the diverse ways art can be a powerful medium for documenting the realities of war and shaping narratives that influence public perception, cultural memory, and international discourse.

The primary conclusion is that women artists play a crucial role in shaping narratives during wartime. Their artistic practices, whether in the form of visual art, theatre, cinema, or literature, serve as significant tools for emotional expression and social commentary. These works go beyond aesthetic value, functioning as mechanisms for fostering dialogue, promoting national identity, and bridging divides between conflicting parties. The emotional depth of their work often resonates with international audiences, allowing foreign viewers to empathise with the experiences of Ukrainians during the war, thus advancing Ukraine's soft power on the global stage.

One of the central findings of this research is that women artists do not limit themselves to soft power roles. Many interviewees have actively participated in challenging power activities, such as volunteering for military-related projects, illustrating the multifaceted roles that women take on during wartime. This duality—engaging in soft and hard power—underscores their contributions' complex and dynamic nature, challenging traditional gender norms and showcasing their resilience.

Another key conclusion is the significant gap in state support for cultural diplomacy and artistic initiatives. Although some participants mentioned receiving support from institutions like the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, the majority noted that their projects are primarily self-funded or supported by international grants. The research highlights the need for the Ukrainian government to invest more in cultural diplomacy and the arts, particularly as a soft power tool. Art plays an essential role in shaping narratives both domestically and internationally, and its strategic use could strengthen Ukraine's position in global affairs, promote its values, and contribute to the post-war rebuilding process.

Moreover, the study underscores the potential for further research on the intersection of gender, art, and soft power. Given that women's experiences and perspectives are often underrepresented in traditional conflict narratives, future studies could investigate how

women's artistic contributions shape cultural memory and influence peacebuilding efforts. Additionally, research into how state institutions can better support creative projects, especially those aimed at international audiences, is essential for enhancing Ukraine's soft power and ensuring the sustainability of these initiatives.

In conclusion, this dissertation asserts that art, particularly the work of women artists, is a powerful instrument of soft power that can influence cultural narratives, foster international solidarity, and contribute to societal healing during and after wartime. The role of women artists in this process is critical, and their perspectives provide a deeper understanding of the human cost of war while promoting values that support peace and reconstruction. For Ukraine, leveraging this cultural capital through increased state support and global engagement is vital for its current war efforts and for shaping its future.

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Chapter VII: Appendices

Appendix A

Information Sheet and Consent Statement for the Interview

Title of the Research: Art as Women's Soft Power during Wartime

Researcher: Valeria Piven, Master's student in the "Global Citizenship and Sustainable Leadership" program at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Duration of the Interview: Approximately 30 minutes

Location: Via video call (Teams)

Objectives:

This dissertation explores the intersection of gender, art, and conflict resolution. The study aims to investigate how women use artistic expression as a tool for creating narratives, broadcasting national identity, explaining political realities, preserving national heritage, and expressing political positions. The dissertation's practical part (interviews) aims to collect women's stories about their involvement in artistic projects, their social roles during wartime, and their opinions on state support for their endeavours.

Interview Topic:

During the interview, we will discuss your experience working with artistic initiatives, practices, projects, etc. We will focus on one of the projects that you believe had the most significant artistic value and practical contribution (such as creating narratives, broadcasting national identity, explaining political realities, preserving national heritage, and expressing political positions). We will discuss the impact of this project on people, its main objectives, global significance, any unexpected outcomes or notable achievements, etc. Additionally, we will talk about the challenges you faced, obstacles, and support from society and the state. We will also discuss your primary social role during the war.

Interview Process:

- The interview will be semi-structured, allowing for an open discussion while covering specific topics related to your experience.
- The interview will be recorded on video to ensure accuracy and capture all necessary information. The recording will be transcribed verbatim and used for analysis.
- I encourage you to speak freely and openly share your thoughts. There are no right or wrong answers, and your honest opinion is valued.
- After the research is completed, you will receive a copy of the dissertation via email.

Confidentiality and Data Protection: Participation in this interview is voluntary, and all information provided will be strictly confidential. To ensure information security, all communication related to the research will be conducted via the university's official email address. The interviews will be recorded on the Teams platform, and the survey data will be stored in a secure OneDrive cloud storage, which is part of the university's Office 365 system. The final dissertation report will anonymise your name and any identifying information. The data collected will only be used for research purposes and will not be shared with third parties.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or concerns before or after the interview, please get in touch with Valeria Piven via email at 2207755@student.uwtsd.ac.uk. If you have questions regarding your rights and participation in the research, please contact ethics@uwtsd.ac.uk (UWTSD Ethics Department).

Consent Statement: The researcher has fully explained to me all details related to the interview, any risks and benefits, as well as my rights as a participant in this research. I understand that my decision to participate in this research will not affect me in any way. My identity will be concealed when using this information. I am aware that I can withdraw my consent to the use of my provided information at any time. I understand that by signing this form, I am not waiving any of my legal rights but only indicating that I have been informed about the research in which I voluntarily agree to participate. A copy of this form will be provided to me.

Participant's Name (Printed): _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Interviewer's Name (Printed): _____

Interviewer's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

RESEARCH STUDENTS

This form is to be completed by the student within **SIX** months for full-time students and **TWELVE** months for part time students, after the commencement of the research degree or following progression to Part Two of your course.

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

This document is also available in Welsh.

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk, with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity. Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:	Valeriia Piven			
2	Tick all boxes that apply:	Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☐	Taught Postgraduate Student	☒	Postgraduate Research Student
3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	University of Wales Trinity Saint David			
4	Campus:	Lampeter Campus			
5	E-mail address:	2207755@student.uwtsd.ac.uk			

6	Contact Telephone Number:	+380955885664
For students:		
7	Student Number:	2207755
8	Programme of Study:	Global Citizenship and Sustainable Leadership
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Ryan O`Byrne

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)	Y ES	☐	N O	☒
					Date
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval	Research Degrees Committee	☐		
		Institute Research Committee	☐		
		Other (write in)	☐		

SECTION C: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

	Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.				
1	UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice				☒
2	UWTSD Research Data Management Policy				☒
3	<i>[List any other relevant documents here]</i>				☐

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and continue to section E.

1	Institution	
2	Contact person name	
3	Contact person e-mail address	
4	Is your research externally funded?	Y ES ☐ N O ☐
5	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?	Y ES ☐ N O ☐

6	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary	Y ES	☐	N O	☐
7		Employed	Y ES	☐	N O	☐
8	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)?	If YES then the permission question below does not need to be answered.	Y ES	☐	N O	☐
9	Has permission to undertake the research has been provided by the partner organisation?	(If YES attach copy) If NO the application cannot continue	Y ES	☐	N O	☐

Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

10	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	YES	☐	NO	☐
If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation (this may be a copy of an email if appropriate).					

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	Empowering Peace: Exploring the Role of Women in Conflict Resolution and Peace-Building Processes in the Example of Colombia and Ukraine			
2	Proposed start date:	01.04.2024	Proposed end date:	01.09.2024	
	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section) Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the points below: <i>Purpose of Research Activity</i> <i>Proposed Research Question</i> <i>Aims of Research Activity</i> <i>Objectives of Research Activity</i> Demonstrate, briefly, how Existing Research has informed the proposed activity and explain <i>What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge</i> <i>How it addresses an area of importance.</i>				
3	Purpose of Research Activity The research outlines key issues related to the roles of women in peace-building processes. These include women's representation in negotiation processes, the impact of women in peace-building activities on conflict resolution, the contribution of women's NGOs to peace maintenance, and the role of women's pacifist movements. The focus of the research project is to explore the crucial role of women in resolving conflicts and building peace in Ukraine and Colombia. While the two countries have different histories, causes, and stages of resolution, the experiences of women in negotiating peace, participating in pacifist movements, and engaging in various forms of activism are significant contributions to the global practice of women's role in peacebuilding. The study offers practical insights to policymakers, practitioners, and academics to create more inclusive and effective peace processes worldwide. The research will examine the challenges, experiences, and successes of women in both countries.				

	Additionally, wars usually worsen existing gender disparities, and women often bear the consequences. Thus, the research aims to investigate how gender dynamics intersect with conflict and how women navigate their roles in conflict zones. (this box should expand as you type)
4	Research Question <i>Research question:</i> How do women contribute to peace-building processes in Ukraine and Colombia, and how can their experience contribute to world peace-building practices? (this box should expand as you type)
5	Aims of Research Activity • Investigate and understand the role of women in conflict resolution and peace-building processes. • Focus on Colombia and Ukraine as examples to explore the dynamics of women's involvement in peace initiatives. • Examine women's participation in formal and informal peace processes, including negotiations, public activities, community-based initiatives, etc. • Examine how women's involvement affects efforts to resolve conflicts and rebuild afterwards. (this box should expand as you type)
6	Objectives of Research Activity • Analyze the perspective of feminist political theory on the pivotal role of women in mitigating conflicts and fostering peace. • Examine existing global policies concerning the integration of women in conflict mediation and resolution efforts, exploring their effectiveness and potential improvements. • Investigate the experiences of women involved in conflict resolution and peace-building initiatives in Colombia and Ukraine, elucidating the contextual factors shaping their engagement and influence. • Conduct a comprehensive survey among people engaged in women-led initiatives in peace-building and conflict resolution, unveiling the benefits derived from women's contributions in this domain. • Develop actionable recommendations and policy directives aimed at fostering the substantive involvement of women in peace initiatives, dismantling barriers, and amplifying the positive outcomes of their engagement. (this box should expand as you type)
	Proposed methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here, but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.
7	Data collection will utilize two methods: an online survey and interviews. The online survey and interview will include Ukrainian and Colombian women who were directly involved in peacebuilding processes in their countries. Additionally, men and women from Ukraine, Great Britain, and Colombia who have experience working with women involved in peacebuilding processes or have witnessed the results of their contribution in solving conflicts/wars will be interviewed. The survey expects to have 10 to 20 participants.

	The online survey will employ a OneDrive-based questionnaire that contains relevant questions. The survey questionnaire will consist of approximately 20 questions. Participants will receive a link to the online survey via email, and their answers will be automatically displayed online (I will be the only one who can access the answers). The interviews will be conducted using the Teams platform, and 8-10 people will be interviewed. The interviewees will be asked around 10 questions, and the conversation will be recorded and saved on OneDrive Cloud storage on the University Office 365 system. (this box should expand as you type)
	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.
8	The data gathering will be conducted online among residents of Ukraine, the UK and Colombia. (this box should expand as you type)
	Research activity outside of the UK If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research then please state this.
9	I will be conducting interviews and research among residents of Ukraine and Colombia. There are no unusual legal considerations or ethical stipulations regarding research activity in these countries. However, it's important to note that the topic of my research is related to military topics. Colombia is currently in the stage of peace building, and Ukraine is in an active phase of war. As a result, these topics are sensitive and require careful handling. As an interviewer, I will inform interview and research participants about the topic of the questions and formulate them ethically and carefully. I will conduct interviews with the active consent of the participants. It's also worth adding that all interviewees are people who work in the field of peacebuilding, so this topic is familiar to them. Since I am Ukrainian, the knowledge of the context of the Ukrainian-Russian war will enable me to formulate questions and minimise potential sharp corners. If I contact interview and research participants through the company or organization where they work, I will ask if there are any ethical rules that should be followed when conducting the interview. Finally, interviewees will be informed that they can refuse to answer the questions at any time or request that their answers not be used in the study. (this box should expand as you type)

10	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents NOT publicly available?	NO	☒
		YES	☐
11	If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales.		

	(this box should expand as you type)
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	Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?	YES	N O
12	A prosperous Wales	☐	☒
13	A resilient Wales	☐	☒
14	A healthier Wales	☐	☒
15	A more equal Wales	☐	☒
16	A Wales of cohesive communities	☐	☒
17	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	☐	☒
18	A globally responsible Wales	☐	☒
19	If YES to any of the above, please give details:		
	(this box should expand as you type)		

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

	Who are the intended participants:	YES	N O
1	Students or staff at the University?	☐	☒
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☒	☐
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☐	☒
5	Prisoners?	☐	☒
6	Young offenders?	☐	☒
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☒
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☒
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.	☐	☒

	(this box should expand as you type)		
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	Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?		
10	How many participants are expected?	It is expected that there will be 8-10 interviews and 20 questionnaires to be conducted. Data collection will utilize two methods: an online survey and interviews. (this box should expand as you type)	
11	Who will the participants be?	Participants will include women actively engaged in peace-building efforts within their respective countries, as well as individuals who have collaborated with or participated in initiatives focused on peacebuilding and conflict resolution alongside these women. For example, the members of Women for Women International; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; La Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres (The Peaceful Route of Women); Жіночий ветеранський рух (Women's veteran movement) etc. Participants will have the opportunity to share their experiences of working with women in the field of peacebuilding processes during online surveys and interviews. They will also be able to assess the effectiveness of their activities, identify practical obstacles and prospects for involving women in peacebuilding in their country, and discuss other related topics. On the other hand, women will have a chance to talk about their experiences and the results they achieved in their activities. They will share how their activities affected the overall picture of peacebuilding in their country. (this box should expand as you type)	
12	How will you identify the participants?	The participants will primarily consist of people within my network. I collaborated with some people while working at an analytical centre in Ukraine. Additionally, through platforms like social media and email, I will reach out to individuals whose experiences align with my research interests. Additionally, participants will be recruited from academic circles, including the universities I attended in Ukraine and Great Britain. Additionally, I will use snowball technique to recognize other potential participants by the recommendation of already interviewed people. (this box should expand as you type)	

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☒	☐	☐

14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☒	☐	☐
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☒	☐	☐
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☒	☐	☐
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☐	☐	☒
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☒	☐	☐
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☒	☐	☐
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☒	☐	☐
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☒	☐	☐
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
	(this box should expand as you type)			

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
24	Will participants be paid?	☐	☒	☐
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☐	☒	☐
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	☒	☐
27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☒	☐
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
	(this box should expand as you type)			

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

	Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them.		
	If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.		
1	Full risk assessment completed and appended?	Yes	☐
		No	☒
2	Risks to participants		

	For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information	
	Risk to participants: (this box should expand as you type) • Protection of personal data: As interviews and research are conducted online, participants may have concerns about the protection of their personal data. • Handling sensitive topics: Delving into topics such as violence, wars, and conflicts requires sensitivity, as it may trigger emotional distress among participants residing in areas affected by such events. Careful consideration is needed to avoid inadvertently causing discomfort or re-traumatization. • Post-interview impact: Recognizing the potential for participants to feel victimized or emotionally affected after the interview is crucial.	How you will mitigate the risk to participants: The participants will receive advanced notification about the survey topics, enabling them to decide beforehand whether to consent to participation. Specifically, people with professional ties to subjects such as war and violence will be targeted for participation (it is important to note that I am referring to professionals involved in peacebuilding processes, not civilian victims of conflicts). Also, understanding the lasting effects of online interactions and where the shared information may circulate underscores the need for ethical conduct throughout the interview process. As for the transfer of personal data, the participants will be informed about following data protection measures and guidelines for safeguarding their personal information: -to ensure the security of information, all communication related to the research will be conducted through the official university email. -interviews will be recorded on the Teams platform and the survey data will be saved on the protected OneDrive Cloud storage, which is part of the University's Office 365 system. (this box should expand as you type)
3	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities	
	As the research activity deals with military conflicts, it may trigger emotional anxiety in the interviewees. In such cases, I will suggest the interviewees to reach out to the hotline for psychological assistance. For those in Ukraine, the hotline number is 0800 100 102, and for those in Colombia, the number is 106. (this box should expand as you type)	
4	Risks to the investigator For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risk to the investigator: • Protection of participants' data: Conducting interviews online introduces inherent risks to safeguarding the personal data of research participants, notwithstanding implemented protective measures. • Addressing sensitive topics: Given my Ukrainian background and	How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator: As interviews will be recorded on the Teams platform and the survey data will be saved on the protected OneDrive Cloud storage, which is part of the University's Office 365 system, I have verified the university's capability to furnish a dependable data storage solution.

	personal experiences with the effects of war, the research topic may elicit a range of responses including the recall of distressing memories, emotional turbulence, and heightened sensitivity. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	As the interviewer, I am committed to managing my emotions and fostering constructive dialogue and engagement with participants, acknowledging my role in facilitating the interaction. For instance, if a conflict of interest arises during an interview, I will remain composed and avoid engaging in arguments with the interviewee. Additionally, I will refrain from discussing my personal traumatic experience of living in Ukraine during the war while conducting the interview. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
5	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University: Protection of participants' data: Conducting interviews online introduces inherent risks to safeguarding the personal data of research participants, notwithstanding implemented protective measures. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to the University: To ensure the security of information, all communication regarding the research with the participants will be conducted via the official university email. The interview will be recorded using the Teams platform, and any data obtained from the survey will be saved on the protected OneDrive cloud storage provided by the University Office 365 system. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
6	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: - <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to environment: - <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

Disclosure and Barring Service				
	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	YES	NO	N/A
7	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	☐	☒	☐
8	If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write "Pending"; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.			

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	Feedback What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?

	Prior to conducting interviews and surveys, all potential participants will receive a Research Ethics Information Form. This form will also include a section with information about the de-briefing process which will take place after the completion of the research project – once the research is finished, participants will receive a copy of the dissertation by email. At the end of the Research Ethics Information Form, participants will be asked to acknowledge that they have read and understood the procedures by checking a box. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
2	Informed consent Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation.
	To ensure that the potential interview participants provide their informed consent, I will follow ethical guidelines. I will provide potential interviewees with a Research Ethics Information Form on OneDrive cloud storage provided by the University Office 365 system. This form will include details on the purpose, methods, benefits, risks, and potential discomfort associated with the study. The form will also state that participation in the interview is voluntary and that participants can withdraw their consent at any time. Additionally, the information form will outline the other conditions for the interview as specified by the UWTSD Research Ethics. Finally, at the end of the form, potential participants will be asked to confirm that they have read and understood the rules and that they consent to the processing of their personal data. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
3	Confidentiality / Anonymity Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.
	I will assign codenames (P1, P2, P3, etc.) to participants and won't use personal or organizational names in research publications. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 “GDPR” and the Data Protection Act 2018 “DPA”)?	YES	NO
1	“Personal data” means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (‘data subject’). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.	☒	☐
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	Recordings of interviews with participants, as well as their usernames, and emails, will be used during my study research. The purpose of my dissertation is to analyze both the theoretical foundations and practical cases of women's participation in peacebuilding. To achieve this, I need to conduct interviews with people who have scientific experiences that are relevant to my research. Since these potential participants are located in different countries, I will conduct interviews and surveys online. To analyze the participants' answers in detail later, I will record the interviews and save them on protected cloud storage on the University Office 365 system.		

	To contact potential participants, I will introduce myself and offer them to participate in the study through email and social media. All further communication will be done via email. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	YES	NO
3	<i>“Special category data” means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects’ –</i> <i>(a) racial or ethnic origin,</i> <i>(b) political opinions,</i> <i>(c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature,</i> <i>(d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992),</i> <i>(e) physical or mental health or condition,</i> <i>(f) sexual life,</i> <i>(g) genetics,</i> <i>(h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),</i>	☒	☐
	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
4	b) political opinions I will not inquire about the political preferences of the participants during the research, as it is not directly related to the topic. However, since my dissertation focuses on conflicts and wars, it is possible that some participants might want to connect their peace-building activities with their political beliefs and may speak about them. In such cases, I will redirect the discussion to avoid discussing politics and will ask relevant questions to bring the interview back to the main topic. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	YES	NO
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☐	☒
6	University computers?	☐	☒
7	Private company computers?	☐	☒
8	Home or other personal computers?	☐	☒
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☐	☒
10	“Cloud” storage or websites?	☒	☐
11	Other – specify:	☐	☒
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation:		
	All data will be stored in password-protected OneDrive Cloud storage on the University's Office 365 system, and will not be shared with anyone. Interview recordings will be transcribed and shown to participants to ensure the accuracy of reporting. To ensure confidentiality, each participant will be given a unique identifier, which will be kept securely in a password-protected folder. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

Data Protection			
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☒	☐
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☐	☒
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☒
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	☒	☐
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☒	☐
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
19	Use of data management system?	☒	☐
20	Data archiving?	☒	☐
21	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and any international equivalents, where appropriate):		
	- To find potential interviewees, I plan to reach out to them through social media by sending a message inviting them to participate in an interview on a specific topic. If the person agrees to participate, all further communication will take place through the official email address of the university. - All data will be encrypted and kept in password-protected OneDrive Cloud storage on the University Office 365 system which will not be shared. - Each participant will be assigned a unique identifier to safeguard confidentiality, with this identifier list stored securely within the password-protected folder. Data will be retained until the conclusion of the research, after which it will be promptly deleted. - Participants will retain the right to access their stored data upon request. Should a participant opt to have their data deleted, it will be promptly removed from the project's records and not utilised further. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	Valeriia Piven <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		
	Valeriia Piven <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
24	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.		

	All data will be securely stored in password-protected OneDrive Cloud storage within the University Office 365 system, ensuring it remains confidential and inaccessible to other people except me. Data retention will be maintained until the research completion, after which it will be promptly deleted. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/). If so please explain. <i>(Most relevant to academic staff)</i>		
	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	YES	☒
27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	YES	☒

SECTION K: Declaration

	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants. In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/		
1	Signature of applicant:	Valeriia Piven	Date: 20.03.2024

For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/Supervisor:		Date:
3	Signature:		

For STAFF Submissions:

4	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:		Date:
5	Signature:		

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☒	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☒	I have completed ALL RELEVANT sections of the form in full.
☒	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☐	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (where appropriate)

☐	I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate) <i>ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT</i>
☒	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
☒	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.

RESEARCH STUDENTS ONLY

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

Appendix C

Interview Schedule

- Please share a bit about yourself and your current role. How has the war impacted your life and your work?
- How would you describe your primary social role during the war? Are there any particular areas or social causes you feel motivated to develop further during this time?
- In what ways are you involved in artistic activities that focus on wartime problems or peacebuilding within the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war?
- Can you highlight one or two significant artistic or cultural projects (such as events, initiatives, exhibitions, etc.) that you believe have had a substantial social or political impact on Ukrainians and people abroad? What were the main objectives of these projects, and do you feel they were achieved?
- How did these projects affect people? (*For example, did it unite or divide individuals based on their views, inspire action, clarify aspects of the conflict, or encourage greater civic engagement?*)
- Have your projects received any support from the Ukrainian government, such as financial assistance, organisational resources, media coverage, or educational initiatives?