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UKRAINIAN ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY DURING THE FULL-SCALE RUSSIAN AGGRESSION

Oleksandr Vysotskyi¹, D.Sc. in Political Science; Igor Polishchuk², D.Sc. in Political Science; Dmytro Korotkov³, PhD in Political Science; Zhanna Chevychalova⁴, PhD in Law

¹ Oles Honchar Dnipro National University, Dnipro, Ukraine

² Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University, Kharkiv, Ukraine

³ Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics, Kharkiv, Ukraine

⁴ Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University, Kharkiv, Ukraine

Corresponding author: Oleksandr Vysotskyi; E-mail: vysalek@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study examines the pivotal role of economic diplomacy in Ukraine's survival and resistance during the full-scale Russian aggression that began in February 2022. Amid a dire economic and financial situation, Ukraine faced an existential challenge, defending itself against a significantly stronger and more resourceful aggressor. Economic diplomacy emerged as a critical strategy to counterbalance Russia's advantages, leveraging global economic and political mechanisms to sustain Ukraine's defense and resilience. The study aims to elucidate the essence, tools, and outcomes of Ukraine's economic diplomacy during the first 18 months of the Russia-Ukraine war. It identifies and analyzes strategic directions of economic diplomacy, including securing military supplies, mobilizing financial aid, imposing sanctions on the aggressor, facilitating humanitarian assistance, reducing trade barriers, and fostering post-war recovery frameworks. The research also highlights the leadership of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in uniting the global democratic community, utilizing innovative communication and value-driven appeals to galvanize international support. Methodologically, the study integrates a technological approach with systems analysis and case studies to uncover the interconnectedness of economic, political, and communication strategies. The authors reveal that Ukraine's economic diplomacy achieved significant milestones, such as securing unprecedented levels of military and financial assistance, imposing comprehensive sanctions against Russia, and fostering a cohesive global response to aggression. The analysis underscores the existential nature of these efforts, demonstrating that economic diplomacy was not only a tool for survival but also a foundation for future reconstruction and stability. Furthermore, the research highlights the transformative role of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's public diplomacy, which transcended traditional statecraft by cultivating trust and solidarity through direct appeals to global audiences. Ukraine's economic diplomacy serves as a model of resilience and ingenuity, showcasing how nations can navigate profound crises through strategic coordination and international collaboration.

Keywords: economic diplomacy, wartime international relations, sanctions strategy, international communication, policy, Russia-Ukraine war, security.

Introduction

Economic diplomacy, as an activity aimed at advancing the state's national interests and protecting economic security through diplomatic means, is of particular importance in times of war. On 24 February 2022, the Ukrainian state became a victim of aggression by the Russian Federation. One of the critical areas of defending Ukraine's sovereignty and ensuring its survival was the active diplomatic activity of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who managed to mobilize public opinion in Western democracies and leaders of the world's leading countries in favor of, first of all, active economic support for Ukraine. This support became the foundation of Ukraine's resistance to the unprovoked and unjustified aggression by its neighboring state. Unlike in peacetime, economic diplomacy has its specifics in wartime, which implies a special dimension of understanding economic diplomacy as a phenomenon of international politics. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the unique experience of economic diplomacy in a country at war, brought to the brink of disaster and forced to defend itself against an economically and resourcefully superior aggressor. Additionally, the prominent leadership role of the head of state in implementing economic diplomacy provides an equally compelling scientific dimension for understanding the essence, directions, tools, technologies, and capabilities of economic diplomacy as a diplomatic activity in the international arena. Given this, the article aims to define the essence and peculiarities of Ukraine's economic diplomacy during the first year and a half of the Russia-Ukraine war.

Methodology

The methodological basis of the study was the technological approach, which allowed us to consider Ukraine's economic diplomacy as a system of technologies - communicative, psychological, value-driven, and symbolic practices aimed at effectively achieving set goals. To provide a deeper and more specific analytical framework, the technological approach is complemented by systems analysis and case study approaches. These methods are particularly relevant given the context of economic diplomacy during wartime. Systems analysis was employed as a comprehensive method to explore the interconnected structure of economic, political, and communication strategies underpinning Ukraine's wartime economic diplomacy. This approach facilitates an understanding of how various components - including international sanctions, humanitarian aid, and trade policies - interact dynamically to form a cohesive response to the challenges posed by the full-scale Russian aggression. By analyzing the structural relationships between these elements, systems analysis sheds light on the complex interplay of domestic policies, global economic frameworks, and the roles of key actors, such as President Zelenskyy, international organizations, and allied states. This perspective allows the study to address not only the immediate economic goals of Ukraine but also the broader implications for international stability and economic security. To ground the analysis in real-world practices and outcomes, the case study method was used to examine Ukraine's economic diplomacy during the first year and a half of Russia's full-scale invasion (from 24 February 2022 to mid-2023). This period marked a critical juncture for Ukraine's economic and political survival, characterized by intense diplomatic efforts to secure military, financial, and humanitarian aid from international partners. By focusing on specific initiatives, such as the formation of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group (UDCG) in Ramstein and the implementation of the "customs visa-free regime" with the European Union, the case studies provide detailed insights into the effectiveness of Ukraine's strategies. These examples illustrate how economic diplomacy was instrumental in mobilizing international support, reinforcing sanctions against the aggressor, and ensuring financial assistance for wartime and post-war recovery. The combination of systems analysis and case studies allows for an exploration of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Ukraine. It demonstrates how economic diplomacy has evolved in response to unprecedented threats, emphasizing the importance of strategic coordination and innovative practices in achieving national and international objectives during wartime.

Literature review

Since the topic of our research pertains to the unique dimensions of economic diplomacy, we first sought theoretical foundations for this study in the works of scholars who have already conceptualized and studied economic diplomacy. Among such scholars are Nicholas Bayne, Stephen Woolcock, Maaïke Okano-Heijmans, Anthony Wayne, Charles Chatterjee, and Miguel Santos Neves. Bayne and Woolcock defined economic diplomacy as the processes of decision-making and negotiation in international economic relations (Woolcock, 2012, pp.1-2; Bayne & Woolcock, 2017, pp. 2-3). Okano-Heijmans defines economic diplomacy "as a forming part of foreign policy that aims to further a country's prosperity, and at the same time

as an instrument in the quest for political stability and national security" (Okano-Heijmans, 2013, p. 3). According to Wayne, economic diplomacy includes a wide range of economic instruments, including sanctions and bilateral or multilateral trade agreements, "to advance a country's economic, political, and strategic goals" (Wayne, 2019, p.23). On the contrary, Chatterjee believes that economic diplomacy serves only to achieve socio-economic development in a country without any "politics" (Chatterjee, 2020, VIII). It should be noted that the researchers did not consider the implementation of economic diplomacy during military operations and determine its role in a belligerent country. Therefore, for our study, the works of scholars who analyzed support for Ukraine in the global world (Khylyk & Khylyk, 2024), as well as the value, legal, and political preconditions for its implementation in wartime (Danilyan et al., 2022; 2023; 2024; Lysyk & Shperun, 2024), served as a critical lens for understanding the various conditions and aspects of economic diplomacy during the Russian-Ukrainian war.

Results

During the war, Ukraine found itself in a dire economic and financial situation. Objectively speaking, the economic potential of any country affects its defense and security capabilities. Moreover, compared to the Russian Federation, Ukraine's economic potential was considerably more modest. In such circumstances, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's diplomatic initiatives to mobilize the international community and the governments of all democratic states to create consolidated support for the Ukrainian state in its struggle against the aggressor played a major role.

Diplomacy has always been about communication. It is a unique form of international discourse aimed at realizing a nation's interests on the world stage and achieving peace through non-military means and conflict resolution based on international law. The globalization of modern communication technologies, the increasing importance of publicity, and the growing demand for openness in international relations have gradually transformed diplomacy into a powerful technology for advancing a state's foreign policy objectives while simultaneously ensuring security and peace on a global scale. Volodymyr Zelenskyy became the first leader to fully leverage the enhanced role of diplomacy as a persuasive technology, aligning the security interests of the global community and ensuring peaceful coexistence based on fundamental principles of international law.

Economic diplomacy, which has become an important area of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's diplomatic initiatives, became the foremost priority for Ukraine's survival and its ability to repel the hostile and expansionist plans of the Russian Federation. The importance of economic diplomacy lies in the fact that modern warfare is primarily a confrontation between economies, which directly determine the military and technological potential of the opposing sides.

A key prerequisite for the successful implementation of the Ukrainian president's diplomatic strategies was the unprovoked and brutal aggression of a neighboring state. According to the UN General Assembly, "aggression is the use of armed force by a State against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence of another State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations" (United Nations General Assembly, 1974). Compared to the UN Charter, this is a refined definition of aggression with a higher threshold for assessing this phenomenon (Sayapin, 2014, p.105). On March 2, 2022, the UN General Assembly explicitly defined Russia's attack on Ukraine as aggression, which was reflected in the title of the resolution itself (United Nations General Assembly, 2022). The resolution was adopted with the backing of 141 countries, which condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Furthermore, the actions of the Russian Federation against Ukraine were classified as aggression once again in the UN General Assembly resolution entitled "Humanitarian consequences of the aggression against Ukraine 2022," which was adopted on March 24, 2022, with the support of 140 states. Later, in its resolution "Furtherance of remedy and reparation for aggression against Ukraine," passed on November 14, 2022, the UN General Assembly went even further by establishing a mechanism for compensating damage, loss, or injury resulting from Russia's aggression against Ukraine (European Commission, 2022).

Russia's blatant, undisguised aggression against Ukraine has given Volodymyr Zelenskyy an unlimited opportunity to implement the Karpman Triangle model in the international arena to mobilize the efforts of the international community to save Ukraine from the Russian aggressor. This is the world's first successful example of such a reframing technology on a global scale. Stephen Karpman proposed his dramatic triangle to analyze interpersonal relationships in 1968. However, it turned out that this triangle can be not only a good methodological and research tool, but also an effective technological tool, especially in terms of mobilization and motivation in the field of international communication, including a tool for

resolving international conflicts. An important function of the Karpman Triangle model is the reframing of conflictual international relations in the dramatic mythological and symbolic dimensions, when the motivation of participants in international interaction is enhanced by increasing the emotional perception of events and, as a result, their greater involvement, as well as by actualizing national, cultural and civilizational archetypes rooted in the heroic past of nations, their values and ideals that define their collective identity. In such an actualized symbolic and value reality, as a result of the reframing technology of the Karpman triangle, entire nations become heroic in the sacred struggle against universal evil, and the aggressor turns into the embodiment of absolute infernal barbaric power, the enemy of the civilized world of freedom and dignity.

Ukraine's economic diplomacy, under President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's leadership, pursued several strategic objectives from the very onset of the large-scale war. Among these, we have identified three as the most fundamental and prioritized: 1) securing arms supplies, 2) ensuring the imposition of sanctions against the aggressor by democratic states, and 3) obtaining financial aid for Ukraine. These three primary goals of Ukrainian wartime diplomacy allow us to draw a metaphorical parallel to the "trident diplomacy" concept - named after Ukraine's official state emblem, the trident. This reflects an example of symbolic communication that has played a role in mobilizing Ukrainian national consciousness by connecting it to a broader symbolic reality, as the trident serves as a millennia-old testament to Ukrainian sovereignty.

In addition to the fundamental strategic directions, there are secondary directions that are prioritized by the main actor of economic diplomacy, Volodymyr Zelenskyy but are no less important for the survival of the Ukrainian people and the preservation of state sovereignty. These include initiating international humanitarian aid for the army, refugees and war victims; easing economic barriers, including the removal of duties on the export of goods to the EU ("the customs visa-free regime"); ensuring unimpeded exports; mobilizing international support for the restoration of cities destroyed by the aggressor; institutionalizing international assistance for the post-war recovery of the Ukrainian economy; forming an international legal and political position on the inevitability of reparations to the aggressor for the damage caused by the attack on Ukraine and the occupation of its territories; attracting investment in the post-war Ukrainian economy.

We will focus exclusively on the fundamental strategic directions of Ukraine's economic diplomacy. This is due to limitations on article length. However, this is enough to cover the topic and achieve the purpose of the study.

Organizing the Supply of Weapons

At first glance, Ukraine's procurement of weapons from its Western allies may appear unrelated to economic diplomacy. However, this is not the case at all. First, the organization of arms purchases is directly related to economic relations. Secondly, Ukraine's lack of financial resources and limited resources have raised the issue of international assistance to the victim of aggression in the form of military aid. Notably, this assistance with weapons to the Ukrainian state is always quantified in monetary terms.

One of the first public appeals of the Ukrainian president to the countries of the world to provide weapons took place on the eve of the war at the 58th Munich Security Conference on 19 February 2022. "We will defend our land with or without the support of partners. Whether they give us hundreds of modern weapons or five thousand helmets. We appreciate any help..." (Zelenskyy, 2022e).

Addressing the Group of Seven, the Ukrainian president noted that "(i)t is better to give Ukraine the kind of weaponry support we really need now than to look for weapons for other countries later. We mean Georgia, Moldova, the Baltic States, Poland, and Central Asia" (Zelenskyy, 2022a).

In the course of his public diplomacy, Volodymyr Zelenskyy widely used the technology of symbolic communication and the technology of appealing to basic human values to gain the trust of foreign audiences. He noted: "The sooner this happens as we ask, the sooner there will be peace in Eastern Europe. This is in our best interest. This is in your best interest. This is in the interests of all democracies. Because democracies must be able to defend themselves. Freedom must be armed. Life must overcome death" (Zelenskyy, 2022a).

By April 2022, the first diplomatic meeting of defense ministers from 43 countries took place in Germany (Ramstein-Miesenbach) to synchronize and accelerate the provision of military weapons to Ukraine to counter a full-scale Russian invasion. In addition to NATO countries and Ukraine, the meeting was attended by Finland, Sweden, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Australia, Qatar, Jordan, Israel, Kenya, Liberia, Morocco, and Tunisia. At the same time, an international defense coalition was created in Ramstein to coordinate urgent assistance to Ukraine. It is known as the Ukraine Defense Contact Group (UDCG) or

the Ramstein Group. By the beginning of September 2023, 14 meetings had already taken place in Ramstein, and the number of participating countries had increased to 54.

The United States has provided the largest amount of security assistance to Ukraine in absolute terms compared to other states since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion, amounting to more than \$43 billion (Clark, 2023). The second largest country in terms of military assistance to Ukraine in absolute terms was Germany, with its military commitments amounting to 7.5 billion euros or ≈8.17 billion dollars (The Kiel Institute for the World Economy, 2023). The United Kingdom was in third place with 6.58 billion euros (≈7.17 billion dollars) of military assistance to Ukraine (Trebesch et al., 2023).

Ensuring that Democratic States Impose Sanctions on the Aggressor

One of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's first speeches on the introduction of sanctions was made on the eve of the war at the 58th Munich Security Conference on 19 February 2022. The Ukrainian president called on Western countries to "(d)evelop an effective package of preventive sanctions to deter aggression" (Zelenskyy, 2022e). Western countries began the process of imposing tough sanctions on 22 February 2022, in response to the Russian president's recognition of the independence of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People's Republic in Ukraine (LPR) and his request to send forces to these regions. The White House characterized this as the "first tranche" of sanctions (Lamy et al., 2022).

Volodymyr Zelenskyy's next public appeal (this time together with the presidents of Lithuania and Poland) to the world's states to impose powerful sanctions against the Russian aggressor was contained in a joint statement by the presidents of Ukraine, Lithuania, and Poland in response to the Russian Federation's decision to recognize the so-called LPR and DPR (President of Ukraine, 2022). Already on the first day of the Russian invasion, 24 February 2022, the Ukrainian president stated that he was in constant contact with the leaders of partner states and international organizations and that Russia had already begun to receive the first sanctions of a large package of sanctions, the most powerful in world history (Zelenskyy, 2022d). Indeed, the sanctions against Russia were unprecedented in world history. Moreover, they are being improved and constantly strengthened. In April, on the initiative of Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the International Working Group on Russian Sanctions was established to assess the effectiveness of sanctions against Russia and find ways to further strengthen them (Yermak, 2022). This group was co-chaired by Andriy Yermak, Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, and Michael McFaul, Professor at Stanford University and Director of the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies.

Through his public diplomacy, the Ukrainian president tried to convey to the world community the idea that the sanctions imposed on Russia help limit its ability to continue its war of aggression against Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelenskyy considered one of the main conditions for successful sanctions to be the speed of their imposition, when the aggressor does not have time to adapt to them, does not have time to find ways to circumvent them (Zelenskyy, 2022f). The Ukrainian leader also identified the synchronization of the sanctions policy of Ukraine's partners and the closure of all opportunities for the supply of critical components to Russia as other important conditions for sanctions that should limit the aggressor's production potential as much as possible (Zelenskyy, 2023). The Ukrainian president has called for sanctions against one of Russia's main allies in Asia, Iran, for supplying barrage munitions known as Shahed kamikaze drones. Employing the technique of cultural opposition, Zelenskyy framed the Russia-Iran military alliance as a terrorist and anti-European coalition, thereby drawing a sharp civilization-based contrast between Asia and Europe. Thus, Volodymyr Zelenskyy said: "using the examples of Russia and Iran, we can show what awaits any terrorist state if it tries to attack Europeans or any other people like this" (Zelenskyy, 2022c).

The diplomatic efforts of the Ukrainian president had their first result only in December 2022, when the European Council imposed the first sanctions against Iran for military cooperation with Russia and the supply of drones to it (European Council, 2022). From that moment on, the European Council constantly tightened sanctions against Iran for Iran's military support of Russia's aggressive war against Ukraine (European Council, 2023).

Ukraine's diplomatic campaign also led to the formation of an international sanctions alliance against Russia. Since February 2022, the EU, the United States, Switzerland, New Zealand, Japan, Canada, and Australia have pursued a policy of coordinated sanctions. They have been joined by South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and some other countries. On 23 June 2023, the EU adopted the 11th package of sanctions against Russia for continuing its illegal war against Ukraine (European Commission, 2023). Despite the unprecedented nature of the sanctions, the sanctions policy has weakened Russia, although it has not yet stopped Russian aggression.

Financial Assistance to Ukraine

From the first days of the war, Volodymyr Zelenskyy has been asking for financial assistance for Ukraine. He proposed to create a permanent working group, a kind of "financial Ramstein" that would deal with financial support for Ukraine and work quickly at different levels - at the level of international donors and at the level of countries that join the aid (Zelenskyy, 2022b). Volodymyr Zelenskyy identified three main goals of the world's financial support: 1) to cover the state budget deficit to ensure the basic fundamentals of people's lives; 2) to rebuild critical infrastructure, restore damaged housing, and purchase energy to ensure the stability of the heating season; 3) to develop a mechanism for insuring war risks for new investment projects, which could be a useful tool to support investment for Ukraine, which is necessary to revitalize the economy (Zelenskyy, 2022b).

States and international organizations have pledged €69.31 billion (≈\$75.32 billion) in financial assistance to Ukraine, much of which has already been disbursed (Trebesch et al. 2023). The World Bank Group has mobilized \$37.884 billion through its mechanisms, of which almost \$23 billion has been disbursed to Ukraine so far (World Bank Group, 2023). This suggests that the Ukrainian president's economic diplomacy has had a partial effect. A permanent working group analogous to Ramstein has not yet been established, but financial assistance to Ukraine is more or less sufficient. Of course, it was not only Volodymyr Zelenskyy's economic diplomacy that ensured the allocation of financial assistance from states and international organizations, but it also became an important prerequisite for the international community's willingness to support the victim of aggression.

Discussion

Economic diplomacy, as a powerful tool for advancing a state's national interests on the international stage during modern warfare, can be fully understood within the framework of security. This is due to the fact that modern wars are largely a competition for economic power. At the same time, economic power is measured by the degree of dominance and sophistication of technology, the transition to the sixth technological mode in all spheres of social production. In this context, economic diplomacy is not just about reaching mutually beneficial agreements to realize national interests in the international arena. Nor is it merely about forming economic alliances and associations to advance common regional and global objectives. It is also more than just a utilitarian tool for implementing geo-economic strategies (Neves, 2017, p. 92; Olsen, 2022, pp. 67-68, 73) or ensuring economic security in isolation. Instead, economic diplomacy is a set of communicative, psychological, value-symbolic technologies that can unite and mobilize the world for a fully secure common future based on the principles of freedom and democracy. Economic diplomacy is a powerful weapon against the aggressor. Economic diplomacy is a tool for addressing global security issues through the mobilization of international economic resources. As we can see, as a result of the Russia-Ukraine war and the special leadership role of President Zelenskyy, economic diplomacy as a phenomenon has been further expanded. Undoubtedly, Volodymyr Zelenskyy's personality has influenced the implementation of economic diplomacy and made it more effective. This is the case when the personality of a diplomat determines the foreign policy achievements of a state in the international arena.

Conclusion

The economic diplomacy of the Ukrainian president has become one of the strategies to combat Russia's invasion of Ukraine and a guarantee of the survival of the Ukrainian nation. By its peculiarities, Volodymyr Zelenskyy's economic diplomacy is existential in nature, both in terms of its goals (survival of the Ukrainian state and its people) and its form of implementation, mainly through personal and existential communications with an emphasis on the values of life and freedom. Public speeches to the foreign public played an important role in the implementation of the Ukrainian president's economic diplomacy. There were more than two hundred of them during the year and a half of full-scale war. During this period, Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed the parliaments of the United Kingdom, Poland, Canada, the United States, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Australia, the Netherlands, Belgium, Romania, Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Finland, the Republic of Korea, Estonia, Portugal, Albania, Iceland, Slovakia, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Czech Republic, Japan, Slovenia, New Zealand, Lithuania, Austria, Chile, Mexico, and Switzerland. This gives us grounds to argue that the Ukrainian president practiced a special form of economic diplomacy - economic public diplomacy. The trust between him and the foreign public, which was built up through his public diplomacy, became the basis for the solidarity of the democratic world with Ukraine. This allowed the Ukrainian state to successfully conduct economic diplomacy during the full-scale Russian aggression.

Ukraine's economic diplomacy has been and continues to be carried out in ten strategic directions. These areas are: 1) securing the supply of weapons; 2) ensuring the imposition of sanctions on the aggressor by democratic states; 3) financial assistance to Ukraine; 4) initiation of international humanitarian aid for the army, refugees, and war victims; 5) easing economic barriers, in particular the removal of duties on the export of goods to the EU ("the customs visa-free regime"); 6) ensuring unimpeded exports; 7) mobilization of international support for the restoration of cities destroyed by the aggressor; 8) institutionalization of international assistance for the post-war recovery of the Ukrainian economy; 9) formation of an international legal and political position on the necessity of reparations to the aggressor for the damage caused by the attack on Ukraine and the occupation of its territories; 10) attraction of investments in the post-war Ukrainian economy. All of these strategic directions of economic diplomacy are interconnected and united by a single goal - to defeat the aggressor at the military, political, economic, and ideological levels, which also implies the immediate effective restoration of the post-war Ukrainian economy and strengthening of Ukraine's political role in the world. The analysis of the fundamental strategic directions allowed us to conclude that Ukraine's economic diplomacy was generally successful, which helped create the preconditions for a strategic turning point in the war with the Russian aggressor. Further studies of Ukraine's economic diplomacy during a full-scale war require a thorough analysis of these seven secondary directions of its economic diplomacy.

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Conflict of Interest. None.

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