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CONTEMPORARY WARTIME DIPLOMACY IN ACTION: THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL CONTEXT OF UKRAINE – EUROPEAN UNION RELATIONS

Zhakun M.,

*PhD candidate in International Law,
Department of International and European Law,
National University “Odesa Law Academy”
ORCID: 0009-0002-4414-8798
e-mail: zzhakun.m@gmail.com*

Zhakun M. Contemporary wartime diplomacy in action: the international legal context of Ukraine – European Union relations.

Against the backdrop of today's complex geopolitical realities, the world is experiencing a state of heightened turbulence, which gives rise to new challenges and threats to the international security system. Following the end of the unipolar era, a polycentric world order has emerged, characterized by intensifying competition among multiple centres of political, economic, and strategic influence. This competition increasingly takes on a confrontational nature, marked by hybrid confrontations, economic coercion, information warfare, and localized armed conflicts. There is growing concern about the risk of escalation in regional conflicts – in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and the Indo-Pacific – which could potentially develop into wider global confrontations. At the same time, the spread of authoritarian tendencies, the weakening of international legal institutions, the crisis of multilateral mechanisms for conflict resolution, and the intensifying struggle for resources further deepen global instability.

Under current geopolitical turbulence, wartime diplomacy acquires a new functional and legal dimension and becomes a decisive tool for safeguarding national interests and ensuring compliance with international law. Modern wartime diplomacy functions as an adaptive legal-political mechanism operating under heightened security pressures and emergency legal regimes. Its effectiveness increasingly depends on the state's ability to combine classical diplomatic means with security-oriented, sanctions-based, and institutional instruments of influence. This study examines the international legal foundations of such diplomacy and demonstrates that Ukraine's wartime practice has catalysed the transformation of external action mechanisms in response to contemporary threats.

The research shows that wartime diplomacy operates within a distinct legal framework shaped by the interaction of international humanitarian law, international security law, and the evolving system of European Union (hereinafter – EU) external action. Rooted in the general principles of international law and treaty-based solidarity mechanisms, it performs not only a political but also a juridical function by institutionalising emergency foreign policy decisions.

Based on Ukraine's bilateral and multilateral cooperation formats, it becomes evident that wartime diplomacy delivers not only declarations of support but also tangible legal and political shifts. Existing instruments of cooperation have evolved into long-term and more structured forms of security partnership, approaching the logic of a quasi-alliance. At the same time, new legal avenues of accountability for aggression are emerging, reinforcing Ukraine's protection in the international arena. As a result, Ukraine is no longer merely a recipient of assistance but an active subject of international law, while the EU increasingly moves from being primarily a “normative power” toward acting as an actor of collective security in the context of armed conflict.

Key words: contemporary diplomacy, wartime diplomacy, international order, international cooperation, collective defence, use of force, armed conflict, European Union, Ukraine.

Жакун М. Сучасна воєнна дипломатія в дії: міжнародно-правовий контекст відносин між Україною та Європейським Союзом.

На тлі складних сучасних геополітичних процесів світ перебуває у стані підвищеної турбулентності, що зумовлює нові виклики та загрози для міжнародної системи безпеки. Після завершення епохи однополярності сформувався поліцентричний світовий порядок, якому властиве посилення конкуренції між декількома центрами політичного, економічного та стратегічного впливу. Це суперництво дедалі частіше набуває конфронтаційного характеру, проявляючись у гібридних протистояннях, економічному примусі, інформаційній боротьбі та локалізованих збройних конфліктах. Зростає занепокоєння щодо ризику ескалації регіональних зіткнень – у Східній Європі, на Близькому Сході, у Південно-Східній Азії та Індо-Тихоокеанському регіоні – які потенційно можуть перерости у масштабні глобальні конфронтації. Паралельно поширюються авторитарні тенденції, слабшають міжнародно-правові інституції, поглиблюється криза багатосторонніх механізмів мирного врегулювання та посилюється боротьба за ресурси, що ще більше дестабілізує міжнародну систему.

За умов сучасної геополітичної турбулентності воєнна дипломатія набуває нового функціонального та правового виміру, і постає ключовим інструментом захисту національних інтересів та забезпечення дотримання міжнародного права. Сучасна воєнна дипломатія функціонує як адаптивний правово-політичний механізм, здатний діяти в умовах підвищеного безпекового тиску та режимів надзвичайного правового реагування. Її ефективність дедалі більше визначається здатністю держави поєднувати класичні дипломатичні засоби з безпековими, санкційними та інституційними інструментами міжнародного впливу. У дослідженні проаналізовано міжнародно-правові засади такої дипломатії та доведено, що практика воєнної дипломатії України стала каталізатором трансформації механізмів зовнішньої дії у відповідь на сучасні загрози.

Досліджено, що воєнна дипломатія функціонує в особливому правовому середовищі, яке формується на перетині міжнародного гуманітарного права, права міжнародної безпеки та еволюційної системи зовнішньої діяльності Європейського Союзу. Спираючись на загальні принципи міжнародного права та договірні механізми солідарності, вона виконує не лише політичну, а й виразну юридичну функцію, інституціоналізуючи екстрені зовнішньополітичні рішення.

На основі двосторонніх і багатосторонніх форматів співпраці можна відзначити, що українська воєнна дипломатія не обмежена декларативною підтримкою, а приводить до реальних юридичних та політичних змін. Її вплив проявляється у тому, що існуючі інструменти взаємодії з ЄС отримали змістовніший і довготриваліший характер, наблизившись до моделей фактичних безпекових союзів. Паралельно формується нова правова архітектура відповідальності за агресію та порушення міжнародного права, яка посилює захисні механізми для України на міжнародній арені. У результаті Україна виступає вже не лише об'єктом підтримки, а повноцінним суб'єктом міжнародного права, тоді як Європейський Союз усе більш виразно переходить від ролі "нормативної сили" до ролі гаранта безпеки та стабільності в умовах війни.

Ключові слова: сучасна дипломатія, воєнна дипломатія, міжнародний порядок, міжнародне співробітництво, колективна оборона, застосування сили, збройний конфлікт. Європейський Союз, Україна.

Formulation of the problem. The relevance of this research stems from the unprecedented transformations in the sphere of international law and relations caused by the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022. This act of aggression not only violated the sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity of Ukraine but also radically altered the fundamentals of the European and global security order, exposing the fragility of existing international legal mechanisms for deterring aggression. The response of the international community to this challenge has revealed a renewed and intensified role of diplomacy – commonly referred to as wartime diplomacy – which operates at the intersection of political, legal, and defence dimensions of state activity [4, p. 15].

Although wartime diplomacy is not a new phenomenon – as armed conflicts have accompanied human civilization throughout history – its contemporary form reflects the evolution of methods, instruments, and principles used to achieve peace and security. The nature of modern warfare, characterized by hybrid threats, information dominance, and global interdependence, demands innovative diplomatic approaches that combine traditional negotiation and alliance-building with new mechanisms of international legal

accountability, multilateral defence cooperation, and strategic communication. Thus, wartime diplomacy today embodies both continuity with historical practice and adaptation to the unprecedented challenges of twenty-first-century conflict.

In this context, Ukraine's diplomacy has transcended the boundaries of traditional political dialogue, evolving into a systemic component of national security – a mechanism for consolidating allied support, attracting military, financial, and humanitarian assistance, building international coalitions, and providing a legal foundation for the legitimate exercise of self-defence. Consequently, the study of contemporary wartime diplomacy and its international legal dimensions – particularly within the framework of Ukraine-EU relations – acquires not only scholarly and analytical significance but also strategic and practical importance. It reflects new forms of sovereign state action adapted to the realities of twenty-first-century warfare and the evolving architecture of international law.

The purpose of this research is to examine the legal foundations and distinctive features of diplomatic cooperation between Ukraine and the EU under conditions of martial law. This analysis makes it possible not only to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of contemporary wartime diplomacy but also to assess the effectiveness of international law as an instrument for protecting states during armed conflicts.

Using the example of Ukraine-EU relations, the article demonstrates how bilateral and multilateral negotiations, as well as joint diplomatic initiatives, strengthen Ukraine's position in the international arena by engaging European partners in consistent and coordinated support against armed aggression. In particular, the focus is placed on the provision of military and defence assistance through EU mechanisms, the implementation of economic and sectoral sanctions against Russia, and the organization of international political platforms aimed at consolidating assistance and promoting peace.

The study also evaluates the effectiveness of the EU's sanction policy and explores the potential for broader European engagement in reinforcing the international isolation of the aggressor state. The article emphasizes the importance of wartime diplomacy as a vital instrument for enhancing national security and consolidating international support for Ukraine in times of war.

State of research on the issue. Recent scholarship over the past two to three years has advanced our understanding of wartime diplomacy by investigating how legal norms, information strategies, and coalition-building adapt under ongoing armed conflict. For instance, Roy Allison's article "Averting acute escalation in Russia's war against Ukraine" analyses diplomatic signalling and tacit "ground rules" used by Western states to manage escalation risks while sustaining military support for Ukraine [8]. In parallel, research on international humanitarian law during the conflict, such as the study "The Ukraine-Russia conflict: An international humanitarian law review of the involvement of foreign fighters", probes the legal status and accountability of foreign fighters and the applicability of international humanitarian law in hybrid warfare contexts [6]. In the domain of European diplomacy and institutional response, the article "European responses to the Russia-Ukraine war" develops a framework for examining parliamentary diplomacy and conflict-era diplomacy within EU institutions. [5] Moreover, Ukrainian scholarship contributes from within the context: "Ukrainian diplomacy before and after 24 February 2022" critically assesses how Ukraine's foreign service reoriented its strategies, particularly in legal framing, narrative shaping, and coalition management, in response to full-scale war [11]. These recent works point toward an emerging-but still under-theorized-field: the integration of legal doctrine, strategic communication, and multilevel diplomacy as a coherent lens for studying wartime diplomacy in the twenty-first century.

Results. Today, an event that occurs in one part of the world can have consequences for the entire international community. The growing number of close political, economic, cultural, and other connections between regions and states requires regulation and the establishment of clear rules governing how such interactions take place. These principles have been articulated in numerous international agreements and declarations, which, on the one hand, help prevent conflicts, and on the other, make cooperation between countries more effective. The existing network of interconnections among states is generally referred to as international relations.

In the classical sense, international relations constitute a system of interactions among various actors, including states, intergovernmental and non-governmental international organizations, transnational corporations, and, under specific circumstances, private individuals. This sphere encompasses a wide range of issues – military and political, economic, environmental, humanitarian, and others – that shape the functioning of the global community [3, p. 40].

In turn, the concept of international relations should not be equated with that of international cooperation, as the latter represents a narrower notion. International cooperation is a specific component of international relations that focuses on the practical interaction of states and other international actors aimed at achieving common goals, resolving shared problems, and promoting stability and development within

Diplomacy serves as the primary instrument for conducting international relations. The concept of diplomacy encompasses both a set of practical measures, techniques, and methods applied under specific circumstances and tasks, and the official activities of heads of state and government aimed at implementing a state's foreign policy and protecting its national interests. In addition, diplomacy is commonly associated with the art of negotiation - the ability to prevent or resolve conflicts, to seek compromise and mutually acceptable solutions, and to expand and deepen international cooperation.

International cooperation is one of the key instruments for ensuring national security, strengthening defence capabilities, and mobilizing global support. It also represents a fundamental principle of international law that serves as the basis for effective interaction among states in addressing global challenges. The Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations (1970) emphasizes that cooperation is not merely a right but also an obligation of states in various areas of international relations [1]. Another important treaty – the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (1975) – formulates the principle of cooperation as a norm according to which states are obliged to “develop their cooperation with one another, as well as with all other states, in all fields, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations” [2]. The elaboration and clarification of the principles enshrined in the UN Charter contributed to their recognition as the fundamental principles of international law and as norms of *jus cogens* [7, p. 35]. Therefore, the principle of international cooperation has a binding character for all member states of the United Nations.

The scope and depth of international cooperation may vary significantly. International cooperation encompasses various components, including the strengthening of diplomatic engagement, the provision of advisory assistance, the adaptation of cooperative measures to the needs and capacities of individual states, the establishment of mechanisms to tailor cooperation to specific actors, and the creation of monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress and assess the effectiveness of cooperative initiatives. It is noteworthy that international treaties often specify the main directions for implementing the principle of international cooperation, such as the maintenance of international peace and security, the universal respect for human rights, and the conduct of international relations in economic, social, cultural, technical, and trade spheres [10].

In the context of contemporary international relations, the concept of bilateral and multilateral relations has evolved into a practical and legal mechanism of Ukraine's wartime diplomacy. It became the institutional and political foundation for building the coalition of states supporting Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity in response to Russia's full-scale aggression. Under wartime conditions, it has proved to be an effective model for uniting the resources and political will of diverse states and institutions.

Since 2022, the concept of bilateral and multilateral relations has transformed into a comprehensive framework of international support, with Ukraine as a key actor and the European Union as a principal coordinator and donor. This transformation marked a turning point in European and global security dynamics, demonstrating the capacity of collective diplomacy to respond effectively to full-scale armed aggression. Within this framework, Ukraine tries to effectively use both bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, ensuring the institutionalization of international assistance, the formalization of legal guarantees, and the development of long-term security cooperation.

In the multilateral dimension, several significant mechanisms were established. Among them, the Ukraine Defence Contact Group (“Ramstein Format”) united over fifty states to coordinate military assistance, logistics, and training. As of September 9, 2025, the 30th meeting of the Group took place in London, chaired by UK Defence Secretary John Healey and German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius, with the participation of Ukraine's Minister of Defence Denys Shmyhal. Over three years, the Ramstein Format has evolved into a key platform of multilateral wartime diplomacy, enabling partners to commit over \$145 billion in military aid and deliver critical defence capabilities – including F-16 aircraft, advanced air defence systems, tanks, and artillery. Each meeting has produced tangible outcomes, reinforced Ukraine's defence potential, and demonstrated the effectiveness of coordinated collective action within the evolving European security architecture [14]. The EU Military Assistance Mission

in Support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine, 2022) became one of the largest training operations in EU history, preparing tens of thousands of Ukrainian servicemen [13].

At the same time, the European Peace Facility (EPF) provided the EU's off-budget instrument for financing defence assistance to Ukraine, ensuring rapid and flexible resource allocation. Cooperation with the European Defence Agency (EDA) also deepened, particularly in defence-industrial partnerships, joint innovation projects, and demining initiatives that directly contribute to Ukraine's defence sustainability and post-war recovery.

The bilateral dimension of Ukraine's wartime diplomacy has been equally crucial. The EU-Ukraine Security Agreement, signed in June 2024, became the first strategic security pact between the EU and a non-member state, institutionalizing principles of mutual support and rapid consultation in case of renewed aggression. In addition, Ukraine concluded bilateral security agreements with individual EU members such as France, Germany, Poland, Italy, and the Netherlands, each providing specific defence commitments and long-term financial assistance. These arrangements enabled the implementation of bilateral defence programs involving advanced air defence systems (Patriot, IRIS-T), artillery, armoured vehicles, and training initiatives - forming a coherent and adaptable security network across Europe.

An important dimension of Ukraine's multilateral diplomacy is represented by the Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC) – a series of high-level international events that have become central to coordinating post-war reconstruction, economic resilience, and long-term integration of Ukraine into the European and global security architecture. Established as a continuation of the earlier Ukraine Reform Conferences (2017-2021), the URC evolved after 2022 into a platform of wartime diplomacy, linking military assistance, financial aid, and reconstruction policy within a unified strategic framework. Each conference – held in Lugano (2022), London (2023), Berlin (2024), and Rome (2025) – reaffirmed the principle that Ukraine's recovery is inseparable from its victory and European integration [15].

In institutional and legal terms, the Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC) embodies the multilateral coordination of commitments among the European Union, G7 states, and international financial organizations such as the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and the European Investment Bank (EIB). The Lugano Declaration (2022) outlined the guiding principles of transparency, accountability, and sustainability in reconstruction; the London Framework (2023) formalized mechanisms for mobilizing private investment under international legal guarantees; the Berlin URC (2024) expanded the agenda to include defence-industrial cooperation, energy security, and green transformation in line with the EU accession process and the Ukraine Facility under the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework 2024-2027; while the Rome URC (2025) further advanced this trajectory by establishing a comprehensive coordination mechanism between the EU, G7, and international financial institutions, emphasizing the integration of defence resilience into reconstruction, expanding the European Investment Plan for Ukraine, and launching the EU-Ukraine Reconstruction and Security Platform. Collectively, these developments have transformed the URC from a post-war recovery initiative into an instrument of strategic diplomacy, reinforcing Ukraine's international legal subjectivity and institutional partnership with the European Union.

Furthermore, the emergence of a "Coalition of the Willing" – a flexible association of states voluntarily united to support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity – demonstrated the adaptability of international law and diplomacy in wartime conditions. This coalition, which includes over fifty states within and beyond the EU and NATO frameworks, expanded the application of collective defence principles beyond formal treaty-based structures. It also reflected a pragmatic evolution of international cooperation: a shift from rigid institutional alliances to mission-oriented coalitions capable of rapid response, joint training, and coordinated defence-industrial efforts.

The European Union, in turn, began to perceive Ukraine not merely as a recipient of assistance but as a strategic partner in shaping the European security order, a position reaffirmed in European Council conclusions (2024-2025) and key CFSP policy documents [12]. The synergy between bilateral partnerships, multilateral EU mechanisms, the URC platform, and the "Coalition of the Willing" solidified Ukraine's position within Europe's emerging security architecture.

Conclusions. The conducted analysis demonstrates that wartime diplomacy has become a defining feature of Ukraine's contemporary international legal and political identity, representing a synthesis of classical diplomatic instruments and modern mechanisms of collective security. Within the framework of international law, Ukraine's diplomacy illustrates how legal norms, bilateral and multilateral agreements, and institutional cooperation can operate under conditions of full-scale armed aggression.

The forms of Ukraine's wartime diplomacy – including bilateral security agreements, multilateral coordination through the European Union – collectively form a multidimensional system of legal and political interaction aimed at defending sovereignty and restoring peace.

Furthermore, another important legal dimension of wartime diplomacy is the sanctions regime of the European Union, which is not a purely political instrument but a mechanism grounded in primary EU law. The restrictive measures against Russia are adopted under Article 29 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and are subsequently implemented through Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which ensures their binding force for all Member States. This legal architecture demonstrates that the EU's response to aggression is not discretionary, but institutionalised as part of its external action obligations to maintain international peace and security.

From the standpoint of international legal science, the Ukrainian experience reveals the evolution of diplomacy as both a practical and normative category, reinforcing the role of international law as a living mechanism of collective defence, solidarity, and justice. Therefore, the study of Ukraine's wartime diplomacy holds significant scientific and applied value, offering new insights into the transformation of the international legal order and the development of adaptive diplomatic models under the realities of twenty-first-century conflict.

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