Ukraine and the European Union: political communication during war

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Abstract.
The study delves into the realm of political communication between Ukraine and the European Union. This is a pressing matter given that collaboration between the two entities has become pivotal for both sides. Ukraine and the EU are embarking on a new phase of cooperation, necessitating an understanding of the nuances of political communication amidst times of conflict. This research aims to dissect the methods and strategies of communication employed by Ukraine and the EU in the midst of military events. It seeks to evaluate the efficacy and outcomes of such communication endeavors, along with their influence on shaping public opinion and fostering international cooperation.

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As an integral part of international relations, political communication plays a crucial role in shaping interactions between countries in military and political spheres. Its effectiveness hinges on the adept utilization of informational strategies, which holds particular significance for Ukraine.

The relations between Ukraine and the European Union boasts a complex history, originating from the era of the Soviet Union. Following Ukraine's independence in 1991, these relations entered a new phase, marked by shared values and interests.

Ukraine maintains partnership and cooperation with the EU. The signing of the Association Agreement in 2014 marked a milestone, aiming at establishing a free trade zone and fostering coordinated political and economic integration.

Since the onset of the Crimea occupation in February-March 2014, the European Union has consistently upheld its support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Additionally, the EU has exerted political and economic pressure on Russia, seeking to compel the Kremlin to cease its aggressive actions.

At the present stage, the relation between the EU and Ukraine continues to thrive with active cooperation across various sectors, including scientific and technical exchanges, cultural initiatives, and energy security. These new dimensions of collaboration signify the ongoing development of relations and a shared commitment to bolstering partnership amidst contemporary geopolitical challenges [10]:

- In 2014, Russia annexed Crimea and initiated armed aggression against Ukraine in the eastern part of the country. These events strained relations between Ukraine and Russia, prompting closer cooperation with the EU.
- In 2015, Ukraine embarked on reforms in the realm of security and defense aimed at bolstering its defense capabilities. These reforms garnered support from the EU.
- In 2016, Ukraine successfully joined the visa-free regime program with EU countries. This step marked a significant milestone towards Ukraine's deeper integration into European structures:
- In 2017, Ukraine and the European Union signed an
agreement regarding natural gas supply, a crucial move in reducing Ukraine's reliance on Russian gas and advancing energy security. The European Union and Ukraine share common values and interests [3].

Let's delve into the development of relations between Ukraine and the EU during the period from 2021 to 2023, when positive progress was also observed.

In 2021, Ukraine and the EU inked the Agreement on Political Association and Cooperation, effectively replacing the previous Association Agreement signed in 2014. This new agreement entails profound political and economic integration of Ukraine with the EU, alongside the establishment of a free trade zone between the parties.

A significant milestone was the commencement of negotiations regarding Ukraine's EU membership in 2022. This decision outlines the country's strategic goal for further Euro-Atlantic integration. During this period, Ukraine and the EU finalized a series of agreements and memoranda spanning various areas of cooperation, including security and defense, economy, energy, culture, and education.

The impact of the military events in eastern Ukraine on diplomatic relations with the European Union (EU) was largely shaped by significant geopolitical instability. The war in the east remained a major challenge for both Ukraine and the EU, shaping the trajectory of their interaction. In response, the EU continued to express unwavering support for Ukraine in countering Russian aggression. This support was evident not only in political declarations but also in tangible actions, such as providing substantial financial, humanitarian, and military assistance.

The EU's commitment to pressuring Russia to halt aggression emerged as a pivotal aspect of its diplomatic strategy. This approach was marked by the EU's readiness to take decisive measures aimed at facilitating a peaceful resolution of the war and restoring Ukraine's territorial integrity [6].

Ukraine and the EU have worked together to address challenges through various strategies and initiatives. The European Neighborhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership Initiative have outlined areas of cooperation, including the
economy, security, and democracy. Collaboration within these frameworks has fostered mutual understanding and strengthened the partnership. The strategies aim to support Ukraine's reforms, improve economic and security indicators, and uphold democratic values.

The hybrid war and information warfare waged by Russia continues to pose serious challenges to Ukraine's security and stability, as well as affecting its diplomatic relations with the EU [2].

The impact of Russian propaganda persists, affecting Ukrainian society and posing a challenge to national unity and resilience against misinformation. In response, the European Union is actively refining strategies to counter Russian propaganda in Ukraine. Additionally, Russian propaganda seeks to disrupt Ukraine's military cooperation with the EU by discrediting Kyiv as an unreliable partner in using Western weaponry for our state's defense needs. Many information campaigns through well-known media channels attempt to create an impression of chaos, corruption, and smuggling. Against this backdrop, there are calls from certain Western politicians and officials to strengthen oversight of how Ukraine utilizes military aid received [2].

In response, Ukraine is showing its willingness to cooperate with the relevant oversight bodies of partner countries, while also taking steps to adapt internally. In 2022, the EU implemented a new set of sanctions against Russia, aimed at countering hybrid warfare. These measures included efforts to mitigate the impact of Russian propaganda and cyber threats on Ukraine.

Additionally, a triad of assistance to Ukraine has emerged, comprising arms, sanctions, and financial support. The sanctions programs targeting Russia could be described as akin to wartime sanctions, representing the most extensive sanctions imposed outside the UN system.

Up until February 24, 2022, two primary sanction programs were in effect. The first involved a ban on any economic activity in Crimea, while the second was linked to actions detrimental to Ukraine's security and sovereignty. However, the list of personal sanctions lacked significant impact. Following the large-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, the
EU underwent a fundamental reassessment of its sanction strategies. Sanctions against Russia and Belarus now encompass prohibitions and restrictions on investments, the export/import of dual-use goods, technology supply for the oil and energy sectors, transfer of aviation-related technologies, SWIFT operations, asset withdrawals, broadcasting of Russian media, and more. Throughout 2022, the EU enacted 9 packages of sanctions. The most challenging decisions revolved around the ban on purchasing Russian gas and limitations on oil product prices, which were joined by other countries [4].

The heroic resistance of Ukraine, bolstered by the support of these countries, is helping to deter Russian aggression and uphold the country's independence.

Ukraine and the EU are continuing their diplomatic efforts toward a political resolution to the war. Throughout 2022, a series of meetings and negotiations were convened with the aim of finding a peaceful resolution. Unfortunately, these endeavors have yet to yield significant results, and the war remains unresolved.

Furthermore, Ukraine maintains active cooperation with NATO through the "Partnership for Peace" program. In 2021, Ukraine initiated intensive dialogue participation, and by 2022, it had advanced to the "Enhanced Opportunities Partnership" level within the program. This expansion enables Ukraine to deepen its collaboration with NATO in security and defense, offering additional avenues for participation in events and knowledge exchange [11].

The EU continues its robust support for Ukraine's military cooperation with NATO. Specifically, aid is extended for military training and education, pivotal components of Ukraine's security strategy. Additionally, partners provide assistance in procuring military equipment and weaponry, fostering the modernization and increased combat effectiveness of Ukrainian forces.

Russia's aggression towards Ukraine has spurred a reassessment of the country's military doctrine and security strategies. In response to the Russian threat, Ukraine has set its sights on NATO membership, aiming to bolster its defense capabilities. Extensive reforms within Ukraine's
security and defense sectors are geared towards enhancing the country's resilience amidst ongoing Russian aggression. These initiatives encompass significant advancements in military infrastructure and the refinement of military-technical capabilities.

Ukraine is steadily modernizing its military capabilities, with a keen focus on improving the effectiveness and combat readiness of its Armed Forces. A crucial aspect of this effort is the substantial military assistance received from the European Union [2].

In consequence of the allocated equipment and weaponry, Ukrainian forces have successfully repelled numerous Russian attacks, particularly in the Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Donetsk regions. They have also inflicted significant losses on Russian aviation and artillery [5].

Economic cooperation between Ukraine and the EU continues to flourish, fostering hopes for stable regional development.

In 2021, Ukraine and the EU signed an Association Agreement aimed at deepening the country's political and economic integration with the EU. A pivotal moment in this journey was the commencement of Ukraine's negotiations for EU membership in 2022, signaling its commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration.

The trade volume between Ukraine and the EU reached 56.3 billion euros in 2022, underscoring the steady growth of their economic partnership.

Diplomatic ties between Ukraine and the EU remained active and fruitful. President Volodymyr Zelensky engaged in a series of meetings with EU leaders, addressing issues such as Euro-Atlantic integration, responses to Russian aggression, and other pertinent topics. These meetings underscored a genuine interest in Ukrainian affairs and underscored the significance of diplomatic collaboration.

The war instigated by Russia against Ukraine dealt a severe blow to all sectors of our nation's economy. However, it also hastened the realization of Ukraine's inevitable journey toward full EU membership. Ukraine's newly acquired candidate status for EU accession necessitates increased institutional efforts, the implementation of measures to
maintain economic stability, and the bolstering of human and humanitarian resources amidst military operations and post-crisis reconstruction [10]. Consequently, Ukraine's importance as a global player will only continue to grow.

It's worth noting that the influence of political communication on the geopolitical landscape is far from over. Thanks to a well-thought-out strategy of information exchange and diplomatic initiatives, this influence will persist in shaping regional dynamics in the future. Previous successes pave the way for further deepening cooperation and the constructive resolution of geopolitical challenges.

In summary, political communication between Ukraine and the EU emerges as a crucial factor for security and stability. This communication has not only strengthened ties between the countries but also undermined Russia's position on the global stage.

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