

International migration of human resources in the conditions of geo-economic transformations as the main influence on the components of sustainable development of Ukraine in the context of national security

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Abstract: The article makes an attempt to comprehend state of the art, perspectives and risks within the realm of human resources migration from Ukraine in the context of today geoeconomic and geopolitical processes and the need to ensure the proper level of national security, as well as maintaining the course towards achievement of sustainable development goals. In the process of study, based on method of synthesis and neorealism philosophical paradigm of research, cases were considered, in particular cases of EU and China, which allow systematizing the vision of countries' performance in today complex global realities and latent backgrounds of migration processes.

Keywords: *Geoeconomics, Human resources, International migration, National security, Soft power, Sustainable development.*

1. Introduction

As stated by Bottone in 2008, “The aggregation of investments, such as education and on-the-job training that improves the individual’s productivity in the labor market” is the standard definition of human resources, or human capital (Bottone, 2008). Due to a purported similarity with physical capital, certain essential components of “human capital” were left out of the original concept. However, despite many parallels between autonomous machines and humans from an economic perspective, humans are much more sophisticated than that. In the recent past, efforts have been made to define “human capital” more broadly by taking into account all the characteristics that people possess that are important to economic activity. However, the definition of human capital has evolved, but it has been somewhat limited to its economic connotations, ignoring the concept’s inherent complexity, which necessitates a thorough reevaluation of its social and cultural worth. Today science uses the key ideas of institutional and evolutionary economics to get a greater knowledge of the variety of components that comprise human capital. This ultimately led to the new paradigm that is currently in use: geoeconomics.

Babic et al. (2022) correctly point out that there is a shift in the global economic system. Even while neoliberal globalization appeared to withstand the 2008 financial crisis, some aspects of it were made outdated by political changes in the years that followed.

Globalization under neoliberalism has taken decades, and now the world economy is changing. It is getting more clumsy, complicated, and hostile (Kryshtanovych et al., 2022). The seemingly stable period of neoliberal globalization that ruled the global political economy from the early 1990s has been steadily disintegrating since 2016. It is not just a theoretical but a realpolitik fact that new hegemonic conflicts between established, emerging, and aspirant nations are emerging. Nonetheless, we maintain that, in contrast to previous cycles of international rivalry, today's struggles for dominance and hegemony will be primarily geoeconomic in nature rather than primarily geopolitical. This indicates that today's global environment is ruled by more sophisticated, economic, and network-centered forms of conflict, collaboration, and competitiveness than the military, state-centered forms of "hard" power contentions (Shahzad, 2022).

The "old" order, which has a significant impact on the form, course, and agency space of the new order, is transforming the nature of international politics. Global value chains, for example, spread internationally during the neoliberal era of globalization, and it is doubtful that they would have a less significant impact on the distribution of power and wealth in a post-neoliberal (and post-pandemic) world (Linsi, 2021). Future geoeconomic rivalry will also be influenced by global production networks, which combine value and wealth chains, and by growing network-like interdependencies in the global political economy. It is necessary for even novel players, such as state-capital hybrids, to move both inside and outside of these established networks (Babic, 2021). Human resources frequently play a significant role in this environment and are even related to national security.

Moreover, today the paradigm of sustainable development permeates the whole discourse in global value chains, supply chains, competitiveness of national production, etc.

All the processes within the above-mentioned phenomena, however, are ongoing within the system of a higher order – geopolitics, in which human capital, human resources became a real strategic tool, or better to say, weapon (Arivazhagan et al., 2023). In particular, migration of human resources ceased to be purely chaotic phenomenon and is increasingly more acquiring signs of planning and presence of latent goals.

Specifically, in the fall of 2021, the leaders of many European nations declared that militarized migration posed a brand-new security danger to their nations. With promises of easy entry to the European Union, Alexander Lukashenko, the autocratic leader of Belarus, lured thousands of migrants and asylum seekers over a few months, mostly Kurds from Iraq and Syria and some Afghans as well. After being granted special passports and being flown into Belarus's capital, Minsk, they were bused to the country's western border, where they were abandoned in vast, open camps as winter came and the temperature dropped. With the use of rubber bullets, water cannons, and tear gas, border guards from Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania sent those trying to enter their countries back into Belarus, defying EU laws and UN treaties that guaranteed humanitarian safeguards for asylum seekers. Lukashenko caused European politicians a great deal of headaches by masterminding a televised humanitarian disaster right outside the EU's borders (Avedyan et al., 2023). The Belarusian leader's intentions are still unknown, but one of his main goals seems to have been to destabilize, embarrass, and create discord within the EU for refusing to acknowledge him as the rightful winner of the rigged 2020 presidential election in Belarus and for placing sanctions on his nation after he violently put down the subsequent pro-democracy demonstrations (Greenhill, 2022).

Ukraine appeared in the whirlpool of geoeconomic and geopolitical processes especially since the first decade of the 21st century (Zharovska et al., 2023). Today, despite the third year of war, the country's economic processes and participation in global supply chains are rather active, achievement of sustainability is pursued, and efforts to develop highly competitive human resources are made (Bazaluk et al., 2023). However, political situation, political 'expediency', directly connected to geopolitics and geoeconomics, influence these processes, making them turbulent and sometimes leading to evident harm

(Skovronska et al., 2023). To comprehend the existing state of the art and outline possible vectors of optimization of migration and human resources issues within the long-term plane of national security, it seems expedient to address to both available theoretical provisions and practical cases of complex interdependence of human resources, migration, geoeconomics, sustainable development, and national security.

2. Literature Review

Research described in the literature demonstrates that although a wide range of elements influence a country's success, perceptions and the soft power they imply have a significant predictive influence (Hammadi, 2024). Gaining more insight into a country's views may help soft power have a beneficial influence on all three economic performance pillars and pave the road for its globalization.

Ukraine has made it quite clear how important it is to have a potent soft power plan (Zayats et al., 2024). According to journalist, publisher, editor, and broadcaster Andrew Neil, "of course, soft power is always vulnerable if you do not have the hard power to protect it. But soft power can be a valuable ally of hard power. Just look at Ukraine" (*Ukraine, sustainability, and the impact of soft power*, 2023).

In 2022-2023, the top ten countries in the Index mainly stays the same, with six countries maintaining their ranks (see to Figure 1).

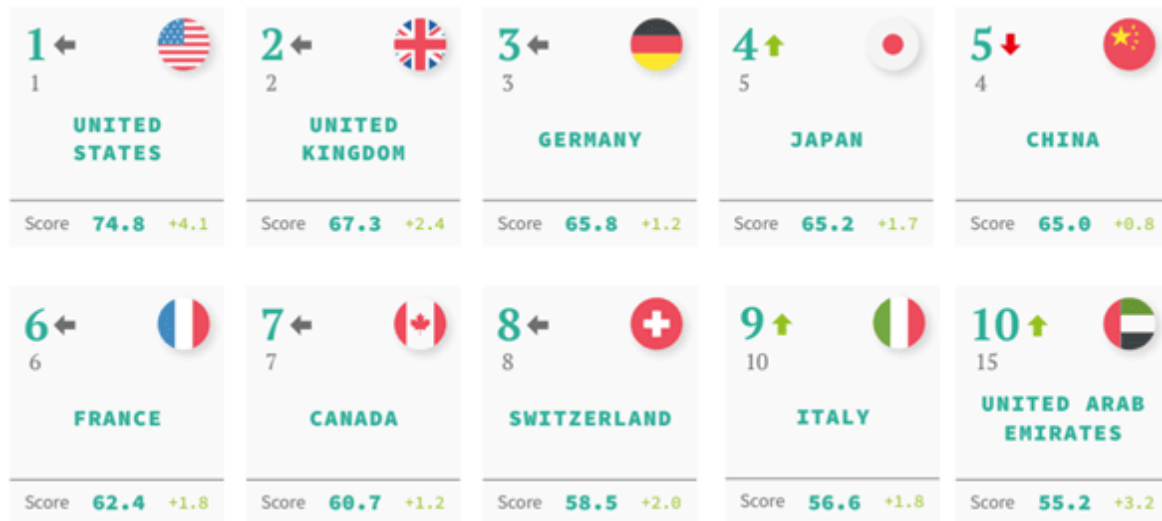


Figure 1.
Global soft power index 2023 (*Global Soft Power Index*, 2024).

Interestingly, United Arab Emirates is the only recent nation to enter the top 10, mostly due to Expo 2020 Dubai's success, on which the country position itself a hub of human capital.

Scholars observe that the primary factor influencing resource productivity and sustainability is human capital, which encompasses social capital as well (Lee, 2018). Specifically, Payab et al. (2023) find that the relationship between CO₂ emissions and industrial value-added is strongly moderated by human capital. The authors further assert that the relationship between CO₂ emissions and per capita income is also moderated by human capital.

Increasing the usage of greener energy solutions across businesses may help manage the trade-off between economic and environmental aims (Sharma et al., 2020). Furthermore, as both are frequently found to be negatively correlated with carbon emissions and ecological footprint over the long term, greater investment in human and physical capital is also required (Ahmed et al., 2019). According to Bano et al. (2018), industries with substantial human and material capital assets have the potential to

enhance environmental quality in addition to increasing output levels (Tsybaliuk et al., 2023). Leading carbon emitter nations may be able to concurrently accomplish a number of socioeconomic and environmental objectives if renewable energy options facilitate this combination.

The realization of production efficiency is contingent upon the quality of input, which includes both human and physical capital. Romer (1990) and Barro (2001) both support this claim for sustainable economic development in their growth models. According to a new UNCTAD research (2020), developed human capital lowers production level wastes, increases production efficiency, and creates an environment for sustainable growth (Yermachenko et al., 2023). This suggests that the countries aim to attain sustainability.

It has only been recently that the connection between human capital and sustainability has been discussed. Unaware of the connections between these ideas, there had been two streams of writing that looked at either (i) the relationship between economic growth and human capital or (ii) the relationship between economic development and sustainability. By examining the link between human capital (as assessed by the Index of Human Capital) and two sustainability metrics - electricity usage and CO₂ emissions - for a panel of European Union Member States, Farcnik and Istenic (2020) contribute to this sparse but expanding body of work (Shavarskyi et al., 2023). The authors demonstrate how a rise in human capital is linked to a fall in energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, and thus, to an improvement in sustainability.

Thus, a country receiving influx of high-quality human capital receives sound gains in sustainable development progress. Accordingly, emigration of significant numbers of professionals can lead to deterioration in achieving sustainable development goals, which is actually seen in Ukraine (Zilinska et al., 2022). While the first wave of emigrants arose exclusively due to active hostilities, the second (in 2023) and third one (in 2024) have quite other reasons – miscalculations in energy policy, lack of regional administrations efforts to strengthen energy system of the country by its decentralizing and building power plants working on alternative energy sources, forced mobilization, aggravation and over-politization of language issue, excessive tax and penalties pressing on small and medium business, decreased quality of higher education, etc. Figure 2 is quite indicative concerning the trend. Comparing to 2022 (the year of invasion and thus fear, chaos, and hostilities even near capital, Kyiv), the number of refugees in the very end of 2023 (the year of clear stabilizing the front line in the eastern region of Ukraine and small part of the southern region, while relative safety of other regions preserved) increased almost for 1 million.

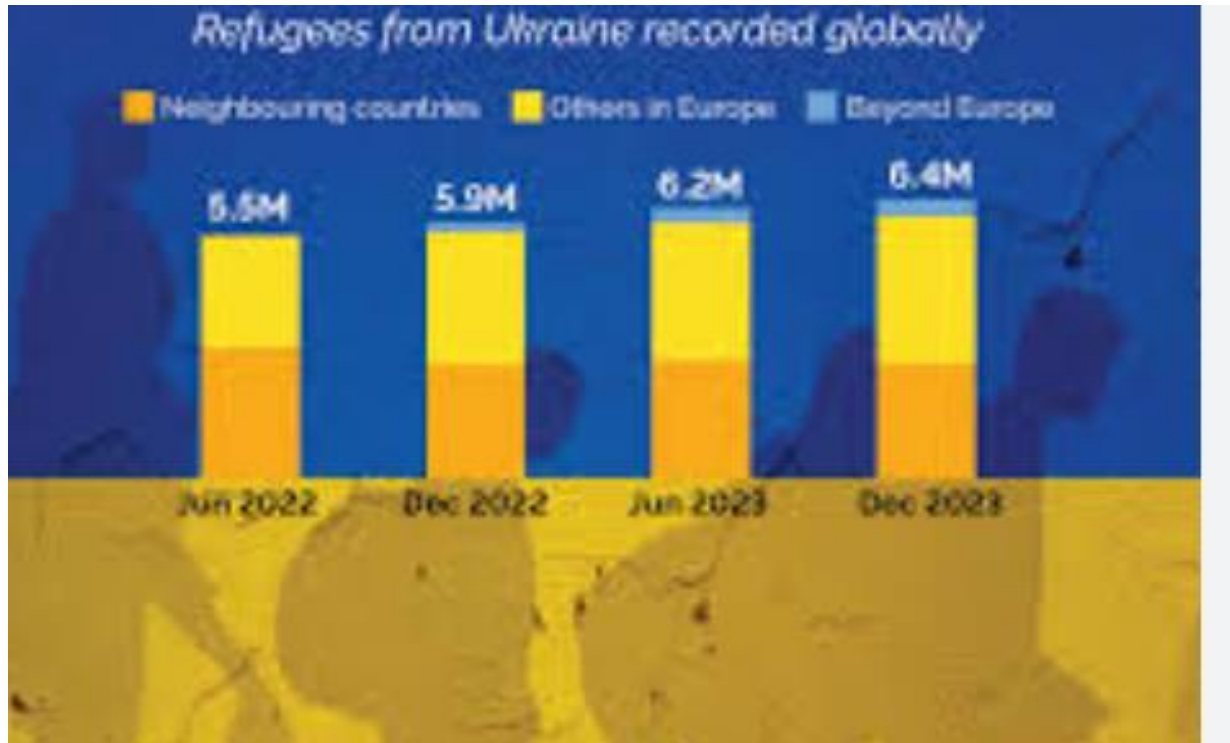


Figure 2.
Refugees from Ukraine recorded globally (Migration Data Portal, 2024).

Unlike the invasion of Russian Federation, the above-mentioned issues are in full power of Ukrainian state bodies. Thus, under the condition of developing well thought-out, weighted and effective policy, not only can the further outflow of human capital from Ukraine be stopped, but attractive conditions can also be provided for the return of citizens who have already left the country.

3. Methods

The theoretical and methodological basis of the article is the research of scientists devoted to the trends in the development of world economic and political relations, the problems of international migration, especially migration of highly qualified specialists in the context of national security and on the background of geoeconomics as a new economic and political reality, factors of migration attractiveness and latent factors that determine modern migration processes.

The study used general scientific, empirical-theoretical, comparative research methods, the method of synthesis of theoretical and practical material (cases).

4. Results

As a result of the Syrian conflict, during what became known as the “Refugee crisis”, the issue of migration came to light. It peaked in 2015 when over five million Syrians and residents of neighboring countries like Iraq and Afghanistan entered Europe under the auspices of being war refugees (Zalyubovskii et al., 2024). As was the case with the Euro crisis a few years earlier, the EU had never seen a scenario like this before and as such, it was forced to adapt and come up with last-minute solutions to satisfy member states whose economies, populations, and cultures differed greatly (Vinichuk et al., 2023). It should go without saying that the issue of migration severely shattered the EU. Just one year later, in 2016, the Brexit referendum was held, coinciding with Poland and Hungary’ beginning to sever ties with the EU. Nationalism rose sharply in Western European countries, including France,

even in those with high democratic indices (Shamne et al., 2019). As a result, the immigration problem has come to represent far-right politics centrally and has contributed to their success in national legislatures and federal elections (Panasiuk et al., 2021). As a result, radical parties began to draw the interest of other players and eventually developed a solid foundation of support in the public eye.

It was not lost on neighboring nations like Russia and Turkey that open-border policies were linked to anti-EU sentiment. Since then, the latter group has been utilizing immigration as a means of coercion to extract political and economic benefits from the EU (Ortina et al., 2023). Russia's government is not interested in having the EU or any other powerful unified group as a neighbor. According to this school of thinking, the majority of anti-migration parties are also anti-EU. Russia's influence on the continent therefore grows as a result of the increasing political and economic fragmentation that occurs at the national and EU levels, leading to a tremendous polarization of the populace and a split and crippled Europe (de Sousa, 2022).

The EU found itself in a precarious situation when forced migration was used. Initially, it was unable to impose harsh penalties on Belarus because to the possibility of further dividing the nation and pushing it in the direction of Russia (Kussainov et al., 2023). Second, the issue was so divisive that it was hard for the EU to resolve: if the EU openly and actively backed Poland, its already precarious relations with that nation would improve, but it would also face reaction from the public for taking an anti-migration stance (Kondur et al. 2024). But it would deepen the rift between the nation and the Union if it forced Poland to take the refugees. Unexpectedly, the EU chose to back Poland in the end.

The intricacy of conflicts in the twenty-first century is portrayed by this scenario. Russia and Belarus were able to put the weaknesses of the Western democracies to the test without firing a single shot (Nekhai et al., 2024). The response would have been more seamless if it had been a foreign drone or armed units breaching the boundaries. However, the fact that it included human lives put the nation in a precarious situation (Litvinova et al., 2020). The nation needed to discover a means to physically exclude the individuals who were being utilized by the other side from crossing its borders because it was not allowed to murder, maim, or attack them. Simultaneously, the EU faced criticism for caving in to pressure from other nations while also coming under internal pressure from civic and social groups to welcome the migrants (Mavroudi and Nagel, 2023).

Thus, international migration of human resources should be seen as a factor of national security namely through the lens of geopolitics and geoeconomics (Gavkalova et al., 2022). Sustainable development goals also play sound role here, forcing the host countries to address migrants' issues in frames of various SDGs of social nature (in particular, minimizing poverty, providing affordable education for all, etc.).

In her analysis of the European Union's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Rosina (2023) makes the case that the EU's policies on visas and refugees included a unique element of soft power and foreign policy. According to the study, the EU signaled the delegitimization and isolation of the Kremlin on the one hand, by restricting Russia's ability to get visas (Byrkovych et al., 2023). However, it also demonstrated the EU's support for freedom and democracy and sent a strong message to Ukraine by granting temporary protection for Ukrainians.

Simultaneously, Ukraine is attempting to establish its place in the global geopolitical and geoeconomic sphere through its immigration to Europe (Deyneha et al., 2016). These efforts, however, are not of systemic nature and evidently are not enough.

Based on the Brand Finance consulting agency's 2023 Global Soft Power Index, Ukraine ranked 14th in terms of recognition and joined the world's 20 most influential nations. Ultimately, Ukraine ranked 37th out of 121 nations in the international soft power rating for 2023. Once more, it should be recognized that the world's increased recognition of our state was largely due to the Russian invasion and the valiant struggle of the Ukrainian people, not to any intentional policy (Gaievska et al., 2023). Statistics from 2023 and 2024 suggest a minor shift in Ukraine's interest, based on the dynamics of attitudes toward the country through various sources of soft power (Mandzii, 2024). This tendency is quite likely to continue in the future, particularly if Ukraine does not start implementing a more

methodical and targeted cultural diplomacy strategy that takes into account the many communities and governments that it works with (Gaman et al., 2022). Separately, it should be mentioned that there is a problem known as “fatigue” among Ukrainian migrants, particularly among German residents who back Euroskeptic populist political groups like the “AfD” (“Alternative for Germany”).

One of the possible ways to improve the situation can be international sustainable development projects and cultural events (which, however, should somehow departure from war themes and concentrate more on positive-minded elements of Ukrainian culture, arts, and literature.

5. Discussion

In actuality, geopolitics serves geoeconomics. Stated differently, geo-economics serves as a tool and a purpose for geopolitics in the context of a changing global environment (Sekaric, 2020).

According to Wegell et al. (2018), geo-economic reality is specifically “inextricably intertwined with traditional military and diplomatic strands of foreign policy”. These two writers contend that China provides “the best available lens to understand how geo-economics tools operate in practice” mainly due to its ability to employ geo-economics tools.

The majority of existing research on the management of migration has concentrated on receiving nations (Gupta, M. et al., 2021). The policies of origin nations regarding migration management have received very little attention, with a few notable exceptions. addressing the PRC, research and documentation on policies pertaining to Chinese living abroad are very extensive; nonetheless, there is a dearth of information addressing the management of continuous emigration movements by the Chinese government (Isaieva et al., 2020). This disparity becomes especially noticeable as receiving nations in Europe increasingly recognize the value of a “partnership with the countries of origin” in formulating immigration policy (Biao, 2003). In general, the Chinese government is eager to avoid confrontations with the international community over migration matters and is beginning to view emigration as a way to further China’s integration with the world. The picture below (Figure 3) clearly shows the China’ concept concerning migration.

China has become a nation of mobile people as well as a major player in the world economy (Vorobei et al., 2021). The 98 million foreign nationals and 350 million mainland residents who crossed the border in 2019 both hit record highs, following a decades-long increasing trend that was only halted by China’s stringent border controls in reaction to the COVID-19 epidemic (Hangen and Speelman, 2022).



Figure 3.

Number of immigrants and emigrants, data for China (Hangen and Speelman, 2022).

Migration has been controlled in the People's Republic of China throughout its history, frequently to further larger geopolitical objectives as well as specific developmental objectives. After 1949, the Chinese government's first priority was managing migration. China, which still views migration with

caution, changed from a nation with little movement to one that is largely characterized by its relations with the rest of the world after the adoption of reform programs in 1979. The nation has grown wealthier, older, and more urbanized, yet it still finds it difficult to strike a balance between political and economic demands.

China has more of an international presence than before. Chinese money has been able to “go out” (*zou chuqu*) into a variety of global businesses, like as retail, mining, and agriculture, thanks to immigrants (Gupta, S.K., et al., 2024). The Belt and Road Initiative has increased its investment since 2013; with government support, state-owned businesses and corporations have constructed highways, power plants, skyscrapers, ports, and other structures all over the world.

According to Xi Jinping, Chinese nationals living abroad have an “irreplaceable role” in helping China become a global power. Beijing is making great efforts to use Chinese resources abroad for its own purposes in the areas of soft power, science and technology, economics, and diplomacy (Kalyayev et al., 2019). Beijing specifically anticipates that German citizens of Chinese descent will strengthen ties with China. Furthermore, they are supposed to defend China’s “core interests”, disseminate Chinese narratives to the German public, and assist in the transfer of information and technology to China in their capacity as “unofficial ambassadors”.

China is aggressively establishing a “network of influence” in New Zealand through emigrants. Nippert and Fisher (2017) reported that Chinese-owned dairy farms in New Zealand may be utilized for sophisticated missile testing. China’s increasing interest in Antarctica, in which New Zealand is a major partner, underscores New Zealand’s significance to China.

Under Xi, the Chinese government has increased its efforts to exert influence abroad, which poses a threat to the integrity and sovereignty of the political systems of the governments it has targeted.

Thus, immigration of human capital today became a strategic tool of geopolitics and geoeconomics vectors of some countries (Klymenko et al., 2016). However, unfortunately, this fact is not yet comprehended either by academic community or public administration and national security bodies.

The phrase “migration diplomacy” has emerged in contemporary political discourse. The paper by Adamson and Tsourapas (2019) examines how state actors’ interests and power are influenced by their place in migration systems, namely the degree to which they are transit, receiving, or sending states (Ostapenko et al., 2023). It does this by drawing on realist approaches in international relations. The essay also explores the connections between migration issues and other state interests and diplomatic concerns, such as security concerns, economic interests, identity issues, soft power, and public diplomacy.

Adamson and Tsourapas (2019) caution that a state’s migration diplomacy is not the same as its overall migration strategy. Migration policies can range from wholly restrictive to allowing for free movement, but they are only meaningful when nations incorporate them into their international relations and diplomacy strategies (Panasiuk, I. et al., 2020). Standard parts of migration policy, such as visa issuance, border control, and a state’s refugee and asylum policy, are not in themselves elements of migration diplomacy (Popovych et al., 2023). Typically, US visa policy is not shaped by diplomatic priorities in the United States; however, in some cases, it has been used as a migration diplomacy tool during interstate bargaining processes, such as in the October 2017 dispute between Turkey and the United States, when travel and visa restrictions were imposed on a tit-for-tat basis.

The March 2016 deal between Turkey and the European Union is a significant, recent example of migrant diplomacy (Khomiuk et al., 2020). In this scenario, Brussels agreed to assist Turkey with 6 billion Euros, expedite its membership application, and provide its nationals visa-free access to Schengen, a 26-country region in Europe that has eliminated internal passport controls. In exchange (Kovaliv et al., 2023). Turkey agreed to reinforce its external borders and allow the repatriation of illegal migrants from Greece. The European Union promised to relocate another Syrian in Europe for every one returned to Turkey under the initiative, up to a limit of 72,000. In November 2016, when the European Parliament decided to stop EU membership discussions with Turkey, the Turkish president threatened to backtrack on the deal. “If you go any further”, President Erdogan said, “these border gates

will be opened. Neither I nor my people will be touched by these dry threats. It wouldn't matter if you all approved the vote" (Mortimer, 2016). For Erdogan, the Eastern Mediterranean country's unique position and capacity to regulate the flow of refugees and migrants into the European Union was a valuable bargaining chip in Turkish migration diplomacy (Greenhill, 2016).

The geoeconomic background of international human capital migration is even more evident in the case of Taiwan, which, like West Germany's *gastarbeiter* program and the *Bracero* program in the United States, developed a guest-worker program in cooperation with Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia in the early 1990s. This program provided these nations' nationals one-year visas to work in Taiwan's construction, manufacturing, and service industries.

6. Conclusions

As stated above, the identity of a sending, transiting, or receiving state is neither singular nor static: some states may only engage in emigration, immigration, or transit migration diplomacy policies, whereas others may employ multiple policies vis-à-vis a variety of different actors at any given time. As governments' objectives alter or their place in the web of global migrant flows shifts, they may adjust their migration diplomacy appropriately. Migration diplomacy is also linked to other areas of a state's interests, such as national and internal security issues, economic interests, and interests in advancing public diplomacy or other types of soft power. Migration diplomacy can be regarded as a zero-sum game, chasing relative gains, or as a positive-sum game, aiming for mutually beneficial results. Today's outcomes should take into account sustainable development goals, which, as previously demonstrated, are based on the quality of human resources.

For Ukraine, under the conditions of war and tremendous amount of citizens left the country, the migration diplomacy should be one of the main priorities, which would allow the country to implement its geoeconomics interests in its current vulnerable position due to Russian missile shelling, and at the background of future after-war reconstruction and strengthening the country's place in global value- and supply chains.

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