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# The Dimensional Logic of Economic and Energy Diplomacy: A Study of Interdependence and Competition for Power

Alexandra-Ştefania Dinulescu <sup>a1</sup>

<sup>a</sup> PhD student, Baku State University

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### ABSTRACT

Nowadays, the foundations of international relations have been redefined, changing from the power of military dominance to the calculated use of economic and energy diplomacy as tools. This article presents the growing relations between economic and energy diplomacy, arguing that energy diplomacy is a sectoral part of economic governance within the vast reality of global interdependence. To explore this relationship, the research revolves around three questions: What are the shared elements of economic and energy diplomacy? How is each element manifesting across the two spheres? How does the interdependence of the elements allow states to transform economic interdependence into geopolitical power?

In order to answer these questions, this article characterizes energy and economic diplomacy by identifying five shared dimensions: context, tools, actors, theatres, and processes. These dimensions connect the two concepts and reveal their strong interdependence, but also their sectoral differences. Finally, the paper shows that understanding energy diplomacy through the bigger vision of economic diplomacy can provide a clearer exploration of how states transform economic interdependence into power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century of global competition.

This study follows the transformation of economic diplomacy, from its traditional, state-oriented model to the new, multidimensional system that incorporates finance, trade, regulations, and technology. It proves how modern economic diplomacy can be both offensive and defensive by expanding national influence through cooperation and market integration, while also managing the vulnerabilities in finance, trade, and resources.

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<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [dinulescu.alexandra-shtefania@bsu.edu.az](mailto:dinulescu.alexandra-shtefania@bsu.edu.az) (A.Dinulescu).

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4226-3815>

# ენერგეტიკული და ეკონომიკური დიპლომატიის მრავალგანზომილებიანი გააზრება: კვლევა ურთიერთდამოკიდებულებისა და ძალაუფლებისთვის ბრძოლის შესახებ

ალექსანდრა-სტეფანია დინულესკუ<sup>a2</sup>

<sup>a</sup>დოქტორანტი, ბაქოს სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი

სტატიის შესახებ	აბსტრაქტი
<p><i>საკვანძო სიტყვები:</i></p> <p>დიპლომატია ეკონომიკა ენერგია საერთაშორისო ურთიერთობები სახელმწიფოები ძალა უსაფრთხოება</p>	<p>თანამედროვე მსოფლიოში საერთაშორისო ურთიერთობების საფუძვლები თავიდან არის განსაზღვრული: სამხედრო დომინირების ძალაზე დაფუძნებული მიდგომა იცვლება ეკონომიკური და ენერგეტიკული დიპლომატიის გააზრებული გამოყენებით. ეს სტატია წარმოგიდგენთ ეკონომიკურ და ენერგეტიკულ დიპლომატიას შორის მზარდ ურთიერთკავშირს და ამტკიცებს, რომ ენერგეტიკული დიპლომატია ეკონომიკური მმართველობის სექტორული ნაწილია გლობალური ურთიერთდამოკიდებულების ფართო რეალობაში. ამ ურთიერთობის შესასწავლად კვლევა სამი შეკითხვის გარშემო ვითარდება: რა არის ეკონომიკური და ენერგეტიკული დიპლომატიის საერთო ელემენტები? როგორ ვლინდება თითოეული ელემენტი ამ ორ სფეროში? და როგორ აძლევს ამ ელემენტების ურთიერთდამოკიდებულება სახელმწიფოებს შესაძლებლობას, ეკონომიკური ურთიერთდამოკიდებულება გარდაქმნან გეოპოლიტიკურ ძალად?</p> <p>ამ კითხვებზე პასუხის გასაცემად, სტატია ახასიათებს ენერგეტიკულ და ეკონომიკურ დიპლომატიას მათი ხუთი საერთო განზომილების გამოვლენით: კონტექსტი, ინსტრუმენტები, აქტორები, სივრცეები და პროცესები. ეს განზომილებები ერთმანეთთან აერთიანებს ამ ორ კონცეფციას და აჩვენებს მათ ძლიერ ურთიერთდამოკიდებულებას, თუმცა ასევე გამოკვეთავს სექტორულ განსხვავებებს. საბოლოოდ, ნაშრომი მიუთითებს, რომ ენერგეტიკული დიპლომატიის გააზრება ეკონომიკური დიპლომატიის უფრო ფართო ხედვის ფარგლებში იძლევა უფრო მკაფიო გაგებას იმის შესახებ, თუ როგორ გარდაქმნიან სახელმწიფოები ეკონომიკურ ურთიერთდამოკიდებულებას ძალად XXI საუკუნის გლობალური კონკურენციის პირობებში.</p> <p>კვლევა ასახავს ეკონომიკური დიპლომატიის ტრანსფორმაციას მისი ტრადიციული, სახელმწიფოზე ორიენტირებული მოდელიდან ახალი,</p>

<sup>2</sup> ავტორი კორესპონდენტი.

ელექტრონული ფოსტა: [dinulescu.alexandra-shtefania@bsu.edu.az](mailto:dinulescu.alexandra-shtefania@bsu.edu.az) (ა.დინულესკუ).

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4226-3815>

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მრავალგანზომილებიანი სისტემისკენ, რომელიც დღეს ფინანსებს, ვაჭრობას, რეგულაციებსა და ტექნოლოგიებს აერთიანებს. ნაშრომი ამტკიცებს, რომ თანამედროვე ეკონომიკური დიპლომატია შეიძლება იყოს როგორც შემტევი, ისე დამცავი: ერთი მხრივ, ის აძლიერებს ეროვნულ გავლენას თანამშრომლობისა და საბაზრო ინტეგრაციის გზით, ხოლო მეორე მხრივ, მართავს დაუცველობებს ფინანსების, ვაჭრობისა და რესურსების სფეროებში.

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## 1. Introduction

The world has become very interconnected and fiercely competitive. The 21st century has transformed international relations into a complex mix of trade, technology, and resource competition. This has forced states to use their economic power as a primary instrument of external policy. In this desperate environment, two domains have moved to the front line: economic statecraft and energy diplomacy, now both central to how a nation can preserve its interests on the global podium.

Since the interdependence of these two dimensions is obvious, an analysis to observe their operational relation is much needed. This presented article introduces a different analytical approach to fill this gap. Energy diplomacy is not a parallel sector: it is a specialized subcategory of the much more complex system of economic diplomacy. Therefore, this study argues that in order to understand how energy is used as an instrument, one must first learn the logic of economic diplomacy.

The most important questions motivating this research are: What are the shared elements that form both dimensions of economic and energy diplomacy? How different are the elements manifesting in the context of the two spheres? How are states using the relationship between economic and energy diplomacy to transform interdependence into political power?

Understanding the dimensional mechanism of economic diplomacy is very important in studying energy diplomacy because it provides the concepts and rational foundations that help in researching the way states use material, financial, and regulatory instruments to achieve their political goals. This system allows scholars to observe energy diplomacy: they can trace how economic structures can transform the geopolitical results, like how market access and investments become advantages, and how regulatory and financial rules can fix the boundaries of energy governance.

The central hypothesis is that energy diplomacy functions through the same structure of economic diplomacy. It shares its main elements; however, each part is completely influenced by the context of energy resources, transforming it into a capable channel for exercising power in global relations. To test

this, a comparative methodology is constructed by adapting and extending the already existing concept model through the introduction of the fifth dimension of analysis (Actors) alongside Context, Tools, Theatres, and Processes. This actualized framework is applied first to economic diplomacy and then compared to its second application in the energy dimension. In this way, it can be observed how general economic governance operations are designed to achieve states' objectives, adding a new characteristic for energy policies.

## **2. Methodology Framework**

In order to dissect and compare the way economic and energy diplomacy function, this study uses an organized analytical framework. This presented section covers the methodology used to discover the complex interdependence of these two domains. The main analytical instrument used is the dimensional model, which is a continuation and adaptation of the foundational system proposed by Maaïke Okano-Heijmans (2011).

The main objective of this methodology is to go beyond descriptive case studies and blend them towards a comparative analysis that reveals the foundation and distinctions between economic diplomacy and its sectoral extension, energy diplomacy. The methodology is constructed on three pillars:

### **A. The Adaptation of a General Model**

This research starts from the four-dimensional pattern used to analyze economic diplomacy, proposed first by Maaïke Okano (2011): Context, Tools, Theatres, and Processes. This model was chosen for its operational utility. It changes the main focus from basic, unfolding events to an organized, dynamic system composed of dimensions that influence one another. Moreover, to fully understand the complex diplomatic practice, this study introduces the fifth dimension: Actors. This new addition allows for a detailed examination of who constructs the policy, negotiates terms, and uses influence, moving the analysis beyond a simple, state-centered research.

### **B. Comparative Dimension Analysis as the main method**

The methodology is presented through the application of this newly designed concept of five dimensions as a consistent pattern for observing both economic and energy diplomacy. This was achieved first by isolating each dimension. This way, they are defined separately and captured through a historical timeline all the way to the present (e.g., the transactional context of the 19<sup>th</sup> century vs. the geopolitical context

of the 21<sup>st</sup> one). The next step is the structural application and comparison, where each dimension is analyzed specifically within the context of energy. The main methodological question is: How can this dimension be formed, influenced, limited, or specialized when the subject matter is energy? For example, the Tool of sanctions exists in both sectors, but in energy diplomacy, it is pictured through embargoes; The Theatre for economic diplomacy is the World Trade Organization, meanwhile, for energy diplomacy can be the OPEC+ meeting or the COP climate summit.

Lastly, the findings for each side are placed side by side (as shown in Table 1.2). This way, a clear relation of interdependence can be seen, together with their sectoral differences. This methodology of comparison is the main tool for arguing that energy diplomacy represents the subcategory of economic diplomacy, but functions as an independent field with its own stakes. Moreover, as many scholars and experts have been considering that energy diplomacy is a new, vague term and that it lacks a proper definition (Steven Griffiths, 2019 & Lam-ya Mostaque, 2022), this methodology allowed the close identification of energy diplomacy elements and introduced a new definition of the term.

### C. Synthesis through the view of structural power

The methodology includes the theoretical concept of structural power (Susan Strange, 1988) as an interpretive section. This represents the criteria for evaluating the *purpose* and *impact* of diplomatic actions, observed through a multidimensional model. When analyzing a state's use of a defensive Tool (e.g., diversifying energy suppliers, interrupting energy flows) or its influence of a regulatory process, the research raises the question: Is this action entirely done to reduce a vulnerability, or is it reorganizing the rules of the game for the other actors? This view allows us to argue that even a reactive diplomatic action can be an exercise of power if it successfully alters the primary structures of production, finance, or security.

Therefore, this theoretical support unites the five dimensions together, explaining how changes in one dimension can project power across the entire system, transforming economic interdependence into geopolitical power in the end.

## 2.2. Literature review and materials

This research work is formed based on foundational texts that have defined economic diplomacy throughout the years, from its traditional state-centered focus on tariffs and trade to its modern, multidimensional transformation. The work of Bayne and Woolcock (2017) reveals its complex purpose

beyond foreign ministries. Meanwhile, scholars like Bozoudi (2025) explain its reach into much more than finance: regulation, technology, infrastructure, and energy. This article follows Susan Strange's (1988) theory of structural power, which offers the theoretical support to help understand how states restructure the frameworks of international relations, turning defense actions into instruments of influence.

When it comes to establishing what energy diplomacy is and what it tries to do, Goldthau (2010) and Griffiths (2019) represent substantial sources. They both state in their works that its main mission is about achieving national interests, whether through one-on-one state deals or through bigger international platforms. This validates the argument of this work that energy diplomacy is a professional form of economic use to gain influence and security. Moreover, papers like Yergin's (1991) are offering a historical background regarding the quest for energy security, and more recent analyses on the geopolitics of energy transition (Scholten; 2018 & Van de Graaf; 2020) explain how the context of diplomacy is being altered by the climate directives and technological advance.

The methodology of this research paper is a continuation of the original model proposed by Okano-Heijmans (2011), who identified Context, Tools, Theatres, and Processes as principal elements of economic diplomacy. This work contributes by introducing a new element as fifth: the Actors. This addition is backed by specialized literature on the increasing number and implication of non-state actors and triangular diplomacy (Strange; 1992), offering a new perspective about the complicated system where multinationals, state-owned enterprises, and economic institutions use important diplomatic forces.

Moreover, the argument of this article is built on other source materials, such as primary diplomatic documents (The Cobden-Chevalier Treaty; 1860), legislative acts (U.S. Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act; 1934), modern documents like the G7 communicates and the U.S. International Economic Strategy (2024), institutional data reports (Bretton Woods Conference; 1944 & U.N. Conference on Trade and Employment; 1948), contemporary reports by World Trade Organization and OPEC, case evidence drawn from international news agencies (Reuters; 2022, 2024 & The Financial Times; 2017) and from think-thanks (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; 2024 & Sustainability Directory; 2025).

### **3. What Exactly Represents Economic Diplomacy?**

In principle, economic diplomacy represents how states do business with each other. It is a part of the day-to-day work of governments, companies, and institutions as they negotiate deals, settle rules, and

manage the global movement of everything: from goods and money to advanced technology. However, N. Bayne and S. Woolcock (2017) explain in their book that this „goes wider than foreign ministries or any closed circle of bureaucrats”. They also argue that the non-governmental international organizations are „as important as a forum for negotiation” (Bayne & Woolcock, 2017), because they are constantly influencing the governments by pressuring them. So, nowadays, the decisions made in boardrooms are just as important as the ones made in war rooms. Basically, economic diplomacy eliminates the old line between domestic economic health and international strategy, transforming trade, investments, and finances into powerful concepts of global power.

Regarding this sphere, energy diplomacy is characterized as one of the most important and fast-developing subdivisions of economic diplomacy. Energy is more than just a product meant to be bought and sold: it is a source of power in every sense, from ensuring stability at home to fueling a nation’s industry and securing its defense. The need to secure affordable energy supplies and control the global energy transition has made energy a main focus in international politics. As Griffiths says: „National energy interests are concerned with energy-related societal goals, including universal access to reliable and affordable energy that supports economic development. Energy security, including energy availability, is perhaps the defining feature of national energy policy, although other essential elements are energy affordability, energy efficiency, environmental preservation, energy sector regulation, and energy sector governance.” (Steven Griffiths, 2019). His ideas reveal both sustainability and security as dimensions of energy diplomacy. It describes the dual nature of energy diplomacy: an instrument of economic policy, but also one of the foreign policies, being directly involved in defending the national interests.

Economic and energy diplomacy point to a significant transformation in international relations: power is moving away from the barrel of a gun towards the instruments of trade and investment. Instead of acting alone, the states are now forced to work through interconnected networks. The old scheme of oppression is being replaced by a new one of negotiation, regulations, and economic partnerships. This new reality means that national interests are integrated into the global governance systems, like the energy markets and regional integration projects. Plus, managing these relationships is not like a simple, one-time task, but a continuous, delicate process of diplomatic integration.

To put it simply, the next section will describe economic diplomacy as the bigger picture: it covers all the ways a country tries to control its international economic environment. It is impossible to understand



the global competition over energy, unless the characteristics of economic diplomacy are presented first. It is essential in learning how states compete and cooperate for power and security in today's world.

#### **4. Economic Diplomacy: Characteristics, History, and Scope (defensive or offensive?)**

Economic diplomacy represents one of the oldest and most complex forms of public diplomacy. Maria Bozoudi (2025) shows a clear difference between the historical and modern economic diplomacy: „Throughout history, economic diplomacy has centered on negotiations on tariffs and quotas”. In contrast, „modern economic diplomacy concerns all types of cross-border connections among people [...] It encompasses a wide range of activities carried out by state diplomatic missions, institutions or private sector bodies” (Maria N. Bozoudi; 2025). It is „a form of diplomatic relations increasingly used by states to enhance political leverage via trade, finance and investment” (Maria N. Bozoudi; 2025).

These depictions show how economic diplomacy has evolved from a reactive process of managing trade in goods to a proactive, complex game plan where a state uses its entire economic toolbox, like finance, trade, and investment, to achieve its national interests and geopolitical purpose.

##### **4.1. Characteristics of traditional economic diplomacy**

In the past, economic diplomacy was characterized by two descriptive categories:

- Transactional and limited: as explained above, economic diplomacy was defined by a series of discrete, strictly technical negotiations. The main purpose was to manage the flow of goods across borders by fixing the import taxes and limiting quantities. The earliest example of this is the Cobden-Chevalier Treaty of 1860 between Britain and France. According to scholars, this treaty shows both the transactional side of economic diplomacy: „the Cobden-Chevalier treaty was decisive at a global level in reducing tariff protection by incentivizing bilateral agreements” (Stéphane Becuwe et. Al., 2018) and the limited, restricted one: „The Cobden Chevalier negotiations were, however, largely free from direct lobbying by industrial interest groups since they were conducted in secret with not open debate” (Stéphane Becuwe et. Al.; 2018).
- State-oriented and defensive (reactive): the principal participants were the national governments most of the time, plus, the objective of economic diplomacy was more like a response in order to protect the internal industries from foreign competition or even to create better market access for the state's exports. A good illustration of this is the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act of 1934, which changed the U.S. trade policy. The Congress had exclusive control over tariffs before 1934,



and, with the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act in 1930, which imposed very high tariffs, the Reciprocal Agreements Act was enacted as a response. In this way, „Congress granted the president the authority to reach tariff reduction agreements-agreements that did not require congressional approval-with foreign countries” (A. Irwin Douglas, 1998). This example shows the state-centered nature, since the negotiations were made between only the national governments. There was no implied role for the private actors or global governance entities. Moreover, this act was strictly focused on the U.S. trade policy governance. As mentioned, it came as a reaction to the high tariffs, so it had the purpose of only fixing the trade relations, not to change them to make them fit into a scheme plan. Even though this act modernized trade policy, it still treated economic diplomacy as a series of technical negotiations over tariffs. It was not a way to impose national influence or create new international alliances. This is why it could be argued that this is the last stage of this state-centered, responsive era of economic diplomacy, before the post-WWII transition into a multilateral, strategic economic diplomacy.

#### **4.2. History of evolution**

After WWII, modern economic diplomacy became a fixture when states realized that peace and prosperity couldn't be achieved without an organized international economic reformation. So, with the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944, which „envisioned an international monetary system that would ensure exchange rate stability, prevent competitive devaluations, and promote economic growth” (Sandra Kollen Ghizoni, 2013), and institutionalized economic diplomacy through the creation of International Monetary Fund and World Bank: „The 730 delegates at Bretton Woods agreed to establish two new institutions. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) would monitor exchange rates and lend reserve currencies to nations with balance-of-payments deficits. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, now known as the World Bank Group, was responsible for providing financial assistance for the reconstruction after World War II and the economic development of less developed countries.” (Sandra Kollen Ghizoni, 2013). Moreover, with the help of the 1948 U.N. Conference on Trade and Employment, this vision was integrated much more easily: „Members shall promote co-operation between national and foreign enterprises or investors for the purpose of fostering economic development or reconstruction in case where such cooperation appears to the Members concerned to be appropriate” (United Nations, World Trade Organization; 1948). All these post-war efforts represent how economic diplomacy started to change from simply negotiating tariffs and protecting national markets, to building a global alliance for mutual help and growth.

The Cold War period transformed economic diplomacy into an instrument of competition. Trade policies, financial aid, or cooperation were now used for expanding the influence and making alliances with rival blocs or against them. For example, scholars like Melvyn Leffer or Mark Purdon admit that the Marshall Plan was not entirely just a generous act, but also a strategy: „It is widely acknowledged that the Marshall Plan’s primary objective was not simply a humanitarian one to rebuild Europe, but rather to contain Soviet influence” (Mark Purdon, 2014). In response to the Marshall Plan and the foundation of NATO, the Soviet Union created the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in 1949, which was „one of the important stages in economic cooperation between the states of the socialist camp” (G. Loktev, 1969). This way, economic diplomacy became an indirect way for an ideological war between states. These events, together with the U.N. for Commerce, Trade and Development and the Group of 77, gave countries a collective voice in the economic negotiation, so economic diplomacy gained a multilateral form. This set the stage for the globalization era, after the 90s, when economic diplomacy broke the ideological barriers and got involved in trade liberalization and markets.

The end of the Cold War encouraged states to move towards market liberalization, which introduced new actors, like „an organization for liberalizing trade. It’s a forum for governments to negotiate trade agreements. It’s a place for them to settle trade disputes. It operates a system of trade rules” (World Trade Organization, 2015). This phase united foreign policy with economic diplomacy, so the states, international institutions, and entities started to govern their own economic relations.

### **4.3. Characteristics of modern economic diplomacy**

Now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, economic diplomacy has become multidimensional, a mix between economics, security, energy, and technology. Modern economic diplomacy has evolved past the traditional trade negotiations to energy transition, regulations, and the importance of global supply chains, and it is described as:

- Far-reaching: economic diplomacy covers everything now, from digital data flows to supply chain security, international financial regulations, multinational corporate investments, and development aid. There are many global examples of this, as the G7 finance ministers declared that countries have to cooperate through financial and development partnerships in order to secure the supply chain and durability: „we commit to jointly empowering low- and middle-income countries to play bigger roles in supply chains through mutually beneficial cooperation by combining finance, knowledge, and partnership, which will help contribute to sustainable

development and enhance supply chain resilience globally” (Al Jazeera; 2023). Likewise, the International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva mentioned that the „security of supplies and the reliable functioning of global supply chains is taking a new, higher priority seat in economic discussions” (Reuters; 2023). Investment and constraining economic measures are also a part of the modern economic diplomacy, and they can be noticed in many nowadays state’s actions, like the U.S. economic diplomacy plan under Biden’s administration in 2024, that mentioned the use of financial sanctions and export controls, together with industrial policy, to achieve geopolitical goals: „To reduce dependence on foreign competitors and strengthen supply chains, it is steering industrial policies in sectors from semiconductors to clean energy. [...] And in response to Russia’s war in Ukraine and China’s technological rise, the United States is deploying an array of coercive economic measures, including financial sanctions and export controls.” (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; 2024). There are other trade agreements, like the US-Mexico-Canada one, that manage digital trade and cross-border data flows, or the TRIPS Agreement, which fights for intellectual property rights. The idea is that all these actions show that modern economic diplomacy is now dealing with more than just trade and finance, but also with tech, regulations, and supply chain security.

- Calculated and geopolitical: the shift is that now, economic diplomacy is used by the states to gain geopolitical advantage. This can be the main idea of its modern definition, because economic power is no longer separate from the political one: „It is impossible to have political power without the power to purchase, to command production, to mobilize capital. And it is impossible to have economic power without the sanction of political authority, without the legal and physical security that can only be supplied by political authority” (Susan Strange, 1988). It has become an instrument of it: a state might offer favorable trade deals to a smaller state, so it can win its diplomatic support. Another one could weaponize investment in important infrastructure to build long-term dependencies. For example, take a look at China’s long-term leasing of Sri Lanka’s Hambantota port, which shows how „Sri Lanka has formally handed over its southern port of Hambantota to China on a 99-year lease, which government critics have denounced as an erosion of the country’s sovereignty” (The Financial Times, 2017). Another case that represents economic motivations used to gain diplomatic orientation is the Nauru one, which „is the latest country to sever diplomatic relations with Taiwan and recognise China” (Reuters; 2024) because of promises of financial and development aid: „Taiwan and China have for years traded accusations about using "dollar diplomacy", dangling generous monetary packages in exchange

for recognition, though Taiwan's government says it will no longer do so and that its aid is more appropriate than the flashy infrastructure projects Beijing often proffers” (Reuters; 2024). Even the essential sectors, like energy, have become instruments of manipulation: „It is unfortunately not surprising that Russia continues to use energy as a weapon against European consumers” (Reuters, 2022).

- **Interconnected and multi-actor:** these acts are not carried out only by foreign ministries anymore. Now, central banks, trade ministries, development agencies, and even corporations and industries are part of the ecosystem of modern economic diplomacy. Studies even show that „state-state, state-firm and firm-firm relations intensified in the new millennium and generated new forms of "trilateral diplomacy," which placed leading multinational corporations (MNCs), along with political actors, at the forefront of big power strategies for global domination” (Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research; 2014).

**Table 4.1. Traditional Economic Diplomacy VS Modern Economic Diplomacy**

<i>Period</i>	<i>Characterization</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Instruments</i>	<i>Actors</i>	<i>Examples</i>
<i>Traditional Economic Diplomacy (Pre-WWII)</i>	Transactional & Limited: tariffs and trade negotiations	Managing the circulation of goods and adjusting tariffs	Bilateral treaties, Tariff schedules	National governments, diplomats	Cobden-Chevalier Treaty (1860); U.S. Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act (1934)
<i>Transition Phase (Post-WWII – Cold War)</i>	Institutionalized & Multilateral: creating the global economic order	Rebuild the economy and regain stability	Aid, loans	States and developing Int.Organizations (IMF, World Bank,etc.)	Bretton Woods Conference (1944); Marshall Plan (1948); Comecon (1949)
<i>Modern Economic Diplomacy (present)</i>	Vast, Calculated, Multidimensional & Geopolitical: the economy became an instrument of global influence	Secure supply chains, influence, and global flows	Trade, sanctions, digital regulation, energy cooperation, infrastructure investment, and economic motivations	States, Int. Organization s, central banks, trade/energy ministries, and civil society	G7; U.S. international economic plan (2024); TRIPS, Belt & Road, etc.

*Source: Author’s compilation using ideas from Maria N. Bozoudi (2025), Stéphane Becuwe et. Al. (2018), Douglas A. Irwin (1998), Loktev G. (1969), Mark Purdon (2014), The Federal Reserve History (2013), U.N. Conference (1948), World Trade Organization (2015), Reuters (2022, 2024), The Financial Times (2017), IMF Manager Director Kristalina Georgieva (2023), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2024), Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (2014).*

#### **4.4. The purpose of economic diplomacy**

The scope of economic diplomacy is both offensive and defensive, which defines a dual character. But nowadays the offensive dimension has become predominant. It promotes exports, attracts investment, secures critical resources, and strengthens the national influence through economic cooperation and market integration. States are deliberately using sanctions, development financing, infrastructure investment, and other economic strategies to achieve their geopolitical objectives and influence others.

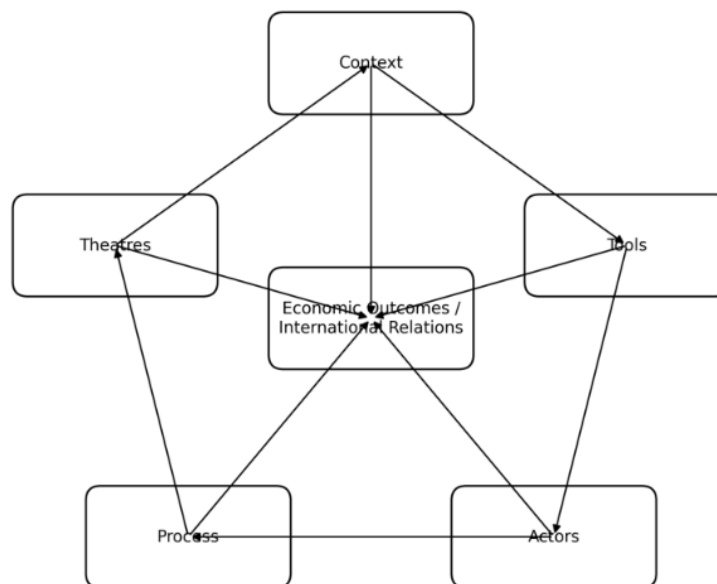
When used in a defensive way, states focus on reducing vulnerabilities, such as trade and resource dependence, financial crises, and supply disruptions. However, this defensive character of economic diplomacy can be questioned when viewed through the lens of Susan Strange's theory on structural power: „What is common to all four kinds of structural power is that the possessor is able to change the range of choices open to others, without apparently putting pressure directly on them to take one decision or to make one choice rather than others” (Susan Strange; 1988), because „Structural power is the power to shape and determine the structures of the global political economy within which other states, their political institutions, their economic Power in The World Economy 25 enterprises and (not least) their scientists and other professional people have to operate” (Susan Strange; 1988). From this perspective, the real power of states can be found in their ability to modify and control the structures through which the global economic activity takes place: production, credit, security, and knowledge. So, even when a state is defending itself from vulnerabilities, if it does it by altering the international rules or institutions, it is actually using its structural power. It redefines the system in its favor. Therefore, even defensive use of economic diplomacy, driven by intentions of power and control, can develop a slightly offensive character.

#### **5. Dimensions of Economic Diplomacy and Why It Matters in the Study of Energy**

Economic diplomacy has reached many dimensions. However, its study remains theoretically vague. M. Okano-Heijmans (2011) proposes an operational view of economic diplomacy that portrays it as a functional system, rather than just a set of negotiations: „The next challenge is to identify essential dimensions of economic diplomacy, within which historically contingent change may occur. Four key elements of economic diplomacy are proposed: the context, tools, theatres, and process. These dimensions spell out the analytical angles that altogether provide a complete understanding of a country's economic diplomacy” (Maaïke Okano-Heijmans, 2011). This subchapter extends her model by adding a fifth dimension: the actors. This can highlight the multilateral participation of governments, international

organizations, and other corporations in the global economic relations. Each dimension represents an important component of diplomacy and none of them acts alone.

**Fig. 5.1. The Mechanism of Interconnected Dimensions in Economic Diplomacy**



*Source: Author's compilation based on Maaïke Okano-Heijmans' (2011) ideas in „Conceptualizing Economic Diplomacy: The Crossroads of International Relations, Economics, IPE and Diplomatic Studies” and on Susan Strange's ideas (1988) in „States and Markets”.*

*Note: Arrows represent mutual influence among dimensions. One change in one dimension alters the next one, ultimately modifying the economic results, economic diplomacy, and international relations.*

In the figure above, context represents the giving circumstances, such as geopolitical relations, risks, global market situation, and prices. Therefore, the context is „the interplay (respectively) between the domestic and international sphere, and between politics and economics. Such analysis provides little insight, however, into the variety and efficacy of instruments that can be used, where certain activities take place, or the ways and motivations of agents who practice economic diplomacy” (Maaïke Okano-Heijmans; 2011). It dictates the diplomatic options and decisions. The tools are „what instruments do governments use and do they bring about the intended effect” (Maaïke Okano-Heijmans; 2011), such as tariff negotiations, financial investments, financial aid, loans, regulations, sanctions, embargoes, bans. Then, actors are the agents involved: the state, which is considered that it „is the primary actor and thereby at the core of this process” (Maaïke Okano-Heijmans, 2011), and its organs (ministries, national banks, embassies, consulates, state-owned enterprises, civil society). But she also underlines that many other actors have a say in (what eventually becomes) foreign and economic policy, like multinational

corporations, international or regional organizations, international banks, project developers, and non-state firms. Continuing, the theaters represent the arena, the „negotiating fora” (Maaïke Okano-Heijmans, 2011). They are the diplomatic settings where the policies are planned: bilateral deals, trade agreements, regional and international platforms, such as forums, conferences, negotiations, and alliances.

Lastly, the process shows the following dynamics: negotiation rates, implementation of rules in institutions, the capacity to solve disputes or crises, policy adjustment, duration of treaties or contracts, institutional durability, adaptability, and coordination. Moreover, processes are addressed primarily by scholars of diplomatic studies and includes „analysis of how negotiations proceed in different modes and environments (such as in summits, regional diplomacy, and bilateral and multilateral economic or monetary institutions), which tactics are used towards what strategic ends, as well as the motivations and the interests of the actors involved” (Maaïke Okano-Heijmans; 2011). These five dimensions form a dynamic, interconnected system. A change in one dimension inevitably alters the others.

New geopolitical contexts need new tools and actors; meanwhile, institutional upgrades require new theaters and processes. This system determines the effectiveness of a state’s economic diplomacy and its position in the global economic order. A justification of this argument can be the way the EU manages to combine these dimensions and turn them into influence. It uses regulations and standards, such as data privacy, environmental standards, or consumer protection, as tools, not just for internal governance, but also for external power in global markets. It has a strong process of law-making, so it negotiates easily through a multilateral theatre, like forums, where many states participate.

This mechanism extends the EU’s internal standards outside its borders. Moreover, A. Bradford (2012) notes: „companies cannot undermine EU rules by moving regulatory targets to another jurisdiction because the EU primarily regulates inelastic consumer markets as opposed to more elastic capital markets. While the EU regulates only its internal market, multinational corporations often have an incentive to standardize their production globally and adhere to a single rule. This converts the EU rule into a global rule: the de facto Brussels Effect”. She even gives examples, such as the EU’s Data Protection Directive that made the participating countries of OECD adopt its privacy laws, and affected many U.S. companies that, ultimately, had to accept its policies to satisfy the requirements in order to avoid legal issues, bans, or penalties. In defense, the EU explains that „it is simply enforcing the norms of the single market equally on domestic and foreign players and merely asking others to play by its rules when operating in its home market” (Anu Bradford, 2012). Basically, it is admitting the use of the effective mechanism of economic diplomacy dimensions.



## **5.1. The Concept of Energy Diplomacy and its elements**

Despite the fact that its meaning is related to foreign policy, some scholars argue that energy diplomacy has no clear definition: „Although there is no exact definition for energy diplomacy, it pertains to government-related foreign activities that aim to ensure a country's energy security while also promoting business opportunities related to the energy sector” (Steven Griffiths, 2019).

A cause for this may be the fact that energy diplomacy refers to a huge range of approaches, basically from locking supplies to infrastructure investment to regulation of climate transitions, making the finding of a single definition a challenge.

Also, another reason can be the fact that „The term energy diplomacy itself is a relatively new addition. It has not yet been defined” (Lam-ya Mostaque, 2022). However, some scholars attempted to form a precise definition. For example, A. Goldthau (2010) suggests that: „While a generally accepted definition of energy diplomacy does not exist, it would seem appropriate to define the term as the use of foreign policy to secure access to energy supplies abroad and to promote (mostly bilateral, that is, government to government) cooperation in the energy sector”. Very important is that the scholar also mentions the fact that energy diplomacy is directly linked to national security, which stands as a validation for the central theme of this thesis: „the primary driver behind the conclusion of oil and gas deals is not necessarily maximizing business opportunities but national security goals; and that the underlying cost-benefit calculations do not follow an economic logic but rather a political one” (Andreas Goldthau; 2010). Moreover, other writers further admit it: „Energy has entered the sphere of diplomacy and foreign policy as a result of its rising impact on national security and economy” (Ana Bovan et. Al., 2019).

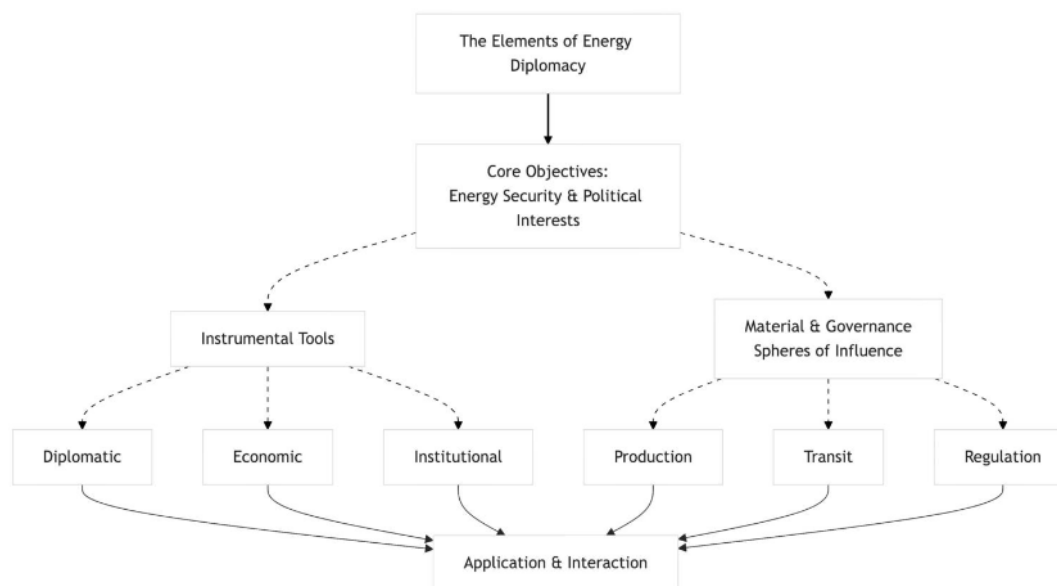
## **5.2. Building a definition for energy diplomacy**

These definitions show that energy diplomacy is not only about the energy market: it is more about how states influence energy flows and dependencies.

Given this, a working definition can be structured as follows: energy diplomacy is the use of diplomatic, economic, and institutional tools by states and non-state actors to control resources, infrastructure, and markets, specifically targeting production, transit, and regulation, with the ultimate aim of advancing their energy security and geopolitical goals.

This definition provides the three important elements of energy diplomacy: (1) the material aspect of energy diplomacy (production, transit, regulation), (2) the diplomatic, institutional, and economic tools used, and (3) the energy security and political interests.

**Fig. 5.2. The Elements of Energy Diplomacy**



Source: Author's compilation based on Maaïke Okano-Heijmans' (2011) ideas in „Conceptualizing Economic Diplomacy: The Crossroads of International Relations, Economics, IPE and Diplomatic Studies” and on Susan Strange's ideas (1988) in „States and Markets”.

Note: This figure portrays energy diplomacy as an organized process. The solid line settles the Core Objectives of energy security and political influence, as the primary purpose („why?”). To achieve these, the actors are using Instrumental Tools („how?”), as represented by the dashed lines: diplomatic, economic, and institutional. They also apply to the three Material and Governance Spheres („where?”): production, transit, and regulation. The combination of these tools and spheres in the final domain of Application and Interaction is the practical execution of energy diplomacy.

### 5.3. Dimensions of economic diplomacy VS. Dimensions of energy diplomacy

Understanding energy diplomacy in this way reveals the importance it carries for national security. Energy supplies represent economic power, but also strong defense, infrastructure strength, population well-being, and technological advancement. As one study says, it „forms the bedrock of a nation's stability and prosperity” (Sustainability Directory, 2025). Therefore, managing international energy relations has become an important diplomatic task. States must work in advance, by negotiating supply agreements, building pipeline corridors, investing in renewables, and creating more regulatory frameworks, to gain market share, but most importantly, to reduce vulnerability to any external surprises.

Because energy diplomacy has the same structural design of economic diplomacy (context, tools, actors, theatres, processes), it is the operational system through which states can transform economic diplomacy into power. Therefore, energy diplomacy is not a separate discipline: it is an expressive section of economic diplomacy, tied to the domain of energy security, infrastructure, and supply chain influence. Observing it in such a way allows scholars to see energy diplomacy as both a continuation of economic governance and an important component of national security strategy. In both fields, the dimensions are analytical functions through which cooperation and competition are settled. But, in energy diplomacy, the context of each dimension changes towards supply security, resource control, tech innovation, and climate governance.

The context is defined by the resource geography, state position, and transition dynamics. The actors are represented by specialized energy ministries, national oil companies, and organizations. The tools consist of long-term energy contracts, infrastructure finance, and carbon-market instruments. Lastly, the theatres can range from OPEC+ summits to climate conferences and bilateral pipeline agreements; meanwhile, the process tends to be slower and more capital-oriented rather than that of general trade of economic diplomacy. Therefore, the two domains are structurally identical, but substantially different: energy diplomacy is a sectoral adaptation of the economic diplomacy multidimensional system.

**Table 5.1. Comparing the Dimensions of Economic Diplomacy and Energy Diplomacy**

DIMENSION	ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY (GENERAL FOCUS)	ENERGY DIPLOMACY (SECTORAL FOCUS)
<b>CONTEXT</b>	trade liberalization, globalization, financial regimes, prices, global market situations, risks	geography, energy security, geopolitical orientation, rivalries, internal political context, frameworks, transition to renewables, tech evolution
<b>ACTORS</b>	states and their organs (embassies, consulates, national banks, state-owned enterprises), multinationals, international banks, project developers, non-governmental, civil society, international or regional organizations	public/private partnerships, energy ministries, corporate and market actors (project developers, state-owned enterprises, multinational energy corporations), development banks, multilateral and regional organizations (OPEC, IEA, EU, IMT, World Bank, etc.), NGOs (non-governmental actors, civil society), researchers, experts

**TOOLS**

trade and market access instruments (tariffs, investment flows, free trade agreements, negotiations, coercive and restrictive instruments (sanctions, regulations)

pipeline diplomacy, energy infrastructure finance, carbon pricing, coercive and restrictive instruments (sanctions on resources, regulations, embargoes, bans), trade agreements, tech transfer, energy transparency, environmental and tech standards

**THEATRES**

forums, conferences, negotiations, regional and international platforms

OPEC meetings, COP climate summits, regional power-grid or pipeline negotiations, project-level partnerships

**PROCESS**

negotiation frequency, implementation monitoring, adaptability, capacity to solve disputes, contracts duration

long-term contract cycles, crisis coordination, climate policy enforcement, technical standards

*Source: Author's compilation based on Maaïke Okano-Heijmans' (2011) ideas in „Conceptualizing Economic Diplomacy: The Crossroads of International Relations, Economics, IPE and Diplomatic Studies” and on Susan Strange's ideas (1988) in „States and Markets”.*

These examples point to a new reality: interdependence is the new battleground. Where the Cold War relied on raw supply disconnections, the struggles of the present are played through contract terms, pipeline routes, and courtroom fines. However, the goal remains unchanged: using the energy to manipulate, punish, or reward.

## 6. Conclusion

Energy diplomacy has never been static. It had to evolve continuously due to the transformations of international relations and the changing nature of the world. The control of energy flows became a necessity to obtain economic development and security. Therefore, diplomacy had to adapt to the new technological, geopolitical, and environmental realities. New actors, like the state-owned companies, multinationals, financial institutions, and corporations, are brought in the game due to the energy markets liberalization, which turns energy diplomacy into an interrelated practice, where state power and market flow meet one another.

Nowadays, energy diplomacy is contoured by the new challenges of interdependence and transition. States are still focusing on fossil fuels, but they are slowly redirecting their attention to the supply chains of clean technologies and critical minerals. However, the mindset of power remains.

This study aimed to understand the mechanisms states use to transform economic interdependence into geopolitical power, focusing on the relationship between economic governance and energy diplomacy. Through the development and application of the five-dimensional methodical framework (study of the Context, Actors, Tools, Theatres, and Processes), this article has offered clear results that confirm the central hypothesis and issue an improved interpretation of the modern dynamics of power.

The primary finding is that energy diplomacy is not a separate discipline: it is structurally related to economic diplomacy. Both domains are structured through the same five constitutive elements, meaning that the principal theoretical model for understanding trade negotiations or economic sanctions is equally applicable to pipeline diplomacy or climate meetings. Therefore, energy diplomacy is fundamentally an expression of economic governance.

However, the comparative examination reveals different patterns within each shared dimension, which describes the modernized, clever, and special character of energy diplomacy:

- Context: it has moved from general market fluctuations to the specific directives of resource geography, energy security, and the technological or political pressures of energy trade.
- Actors: it expanded to other specialized players (national oil companies, multinational energy corporations). Their technical and economic power allows them to take important diplomatic actions.
- Tools: it has specialized instruments such as long-term contracts, infrastructure (pipelines, liquified natural gas), renewables, together with pressure tools like resource embargoes.
- Theatres: it has moved from a large area of trade forums to personalized arenas (OPEC+, COP summits, pipeline negotiations).
- Processes: it is now characterized by much longer contracts, involves huge financial investments, and focuses on settling detailed technical rules. This happens because energy projects now require huge upfront spending that cannot be easily undone. Once infrastructure is built, it is way too expensive to change.

The interaction of these specialized elements explains how interdependence can become influence. For example, a state can use its regulatory processes and market-size context to set environmental standards (a tool), which non-state actors (multinationals) globalize, thereby projecting the state's regulations into third-country markets. This summarizes Susan Strange's theory of structural power. In the same way, a state rich in resources can use its control over production (context and actors) to negotiate infrastructure

deals (theatre and tool) that create long-term dependencies and, therefore, turn energy trade into diplomatic power.

Regarding the main research questions, the study concludes that the interdependence of elements itself is the conversion mechanism. The calculated use of specific actors, tools, and processes within a given geopolitical and resource context, performed in dedicated diplomatic theatres, represents how states can influence interdependence. They are not just defending themselves or lowering the vulnerabilities; they are restructuring the global energy and economic terrain to their advantage.

The struggles nowadays are indeed played out through contract terms, pipeline routes, and standards. The mindset of power persists, but the instruments have evolved. By introducing the presented methodological framework through this research article, a better understanding of the diplomacy of interdependence has been revealed, where economy and energy are integrated in the hunt for national power.

## **Declarations**

I, Alexandra-Ştefania Dinulescu, confirm that:

This work is original and has been written entirely by me. This manuscript has not been published elsewhere, nor is it currently under any consideration by any other journal.

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