

UA: UKRAINE ANALYTICA

Issue 1 (15), 2019



- UKRAINE'S PROSPECTS
- FOREIGN POLICY
- BEYOND EUROPE

Ukraine and the World

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Publisher:

Published by NGO "Promotion of Intercultural Cooperation" (Ukraine), Centre of International Studies (Ukraine), with the financial support of the Representation of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Ukraine, the Black Sea Trust.

UA: Ukraine Analytica is the first Ukrainian analytical journal in English on International Relations, Politics and Economics. The journal is aimed for experts, diplomats, academics, students interested in the international relations and Ukraine in particular.

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ISSN 2518-7481

500 copies

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SOME ELEMENTS OF STRATEGY AND PROSPECTS OF UKRAINE'S RELATIONS WITH THE COUNTRIES OF THE EAST ASIAN REGION

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Under today's political and security conditions, the emphasis in foreign policy of Ukraine is made on Euro-Atlantic direction. However, this negatively affects the strategy of diversifying political and trade-economic ties with other regions, in particular the East Asian region (EAR), which is the world's largest centre of economic growth. For most EAR countries, Ukraine is not a priority partner or a significant actor in the region's economy, just as the region, with the exception of individual countries, is not a significant actor in Ukraine's economy. In this context, analysis of preferences and perspectives of the EAR for Ukraine is presented. Some elements of a strategy of Ukraine's relations with the region are formulated; a number of recommendations are given.

Introduction

In today's complicated political and security conditions, Ukraine puts more emphasis on a single-vector of Euro-Atlantic strategy in its foreign policy. This negatively affects the possibilities of implementing a strategy of diversifying political, trade, and economic relations of Ukraine through the development of cooperation with other regions of the world, in particular, with the most dynamic East Asian region (EAR). High dynamics of economic development, active political dialogue between regional and non-regional states, both bilaterally and in the framework of multilateral regional forums, raise the EAR to the level of the main centre of world economic and political attraction, a powerful engine for the world development.



The EAR is attractive today as the world's largest centre of economic growth, ahead of other regions in the pace of development and introduction of innovative technologies

The EAR is attractive today as the world's largest centre of economic growth, ahead of other regions in the pace of development and introduction of innovative technologies. The region includes the Asian Pacific countries, which are grouped together in two sub-regions: Northeast Asia (NEA) and Southeast Asia (SEA). There are politically, economically, and militarily powerful states in the EAR, among which China, Japan, and

Russia are considered to be global and regional centres of political influence. The countries of the region make up one third of the G-20^{1,2}.

The financial and economic crisis of 2008-2009 stimulated the already high dynamics of development in the EAR, turning it into an important centre of world politics and economy, in particular in comparison to the Euro-Atlantic space. Today's key trend is that emerging markets are showing unprecedented growth. According to the UN Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific,³ developing economies were on track to record an overall growth rate of 5.8 per cent in 2017, compared with 5.4 per cent the previous year. For 2018 and 2019, these economies were growing by 5.5 per cent.

The largest increase in GDP is demonstrated by seven Asian countries, including four East Asian: Vietnam, Indonesia, China, and Malaysia. The rapid development of the EAR is due to the following competitive advantages: low labour costs, high level of financial accumulation, forced industrialization, investment in human resources, and export orientation of production. Despite such attractive features of the region, the level of practical cooperation between Ukraine and region's countries cannot meet Ukraine's needs, in particular, taking into account the continuation of the acute economic crisis, both in the state itself (which is caused, in particular, by the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict) and in our main trade and economic partners in Europe. In this regard, there is an urgent need for a detailed analysis of possible ways of establishing and developing

further trade and economic, investment, and other practical cooperation of Ukraine with the countries of the region.

Ukraine and Eastern Asia

Ukraine's relations with the EAR today are based on a solid foundation of modern history. At the final stage of the Second World War, the USSR made a decisive contribution to the victory over Japan. During the Cold War, relations were established between the USSR, and Ukraine as a part of it, and a number of SEA countries, including Indonesia and the countries of Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar).

Independent Ukraine has been actively developing contacts with the region through diplomatic relations with all its countries. It has embassies in the capitals of three countries of Northeast Asia and five countries of SEA. The priority areas for cooperation with the ASEAN countries should be: trade and economic, investment cooperation, expansion of sectorial cooperation in the areas of trade, energy, space, aircraft engineering, shipbuilding, transport, education, and culture.

For most EAR countries, Ukraine is not an active partner today. And the continuation of the Russian-Ukrainian war is not the only reason for this. Ukrainian investments in the region's economies are practically absent. Our country is not a significant actor in the region's economy, as well as the region, with the exception of individual countries (China, Japan, South Korea), is not a significant actor in Ukraine's economy.

- 1 С. Шергін, І. Лоссовський, *Росія в азійсько-тихоокеанській інтеграції: погляд з Києва та Владивостока* (*Russia in Asia-Pacific Integration: View from Kyiv and Vladivostok*), "Зовнішні справи" (UA Foreign Affairs), No. 9, 2012, pp.16-21; No. 10, pp. 30-35.
- 2 І.Є. Лоссовський, *Азійсько-тихоокеанська інтеграція Росії та можливі перспективи регіональної співпраці України* (*Russia's Asia-Pacific Integration and Some Prospects for Regional Cooperation of Ukraine*), "Університет", No. 1, 2013, pp. 11-34.
- 3 *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2018*, United Nations ESCAP, 07 May 2018 [<https://www.unescap.org/publications/economic-and-social-survey-asia-and-pacific-2018>].

Today there is practically no production cooperation; investment cooperation with East Asian partners is in the initial stage. Only Ukrainian exporters of raw materials, mineral fertilizers, and metallurgical products show real interest in the EAR.

In addition, Ukraine lacks a conceptual approach, strategy, and meaningful policy towards this region. There is also a lack of understanding of real national interests and no defined priorities concerning the EAR states' policies⁴. Ukraine should focus on increasing influence, activating foreign policy, political and economic presence in the region, which would be impossible without development of appropriate state programs, plans, and strategies.

A characteristic feature of the integration processes in the EAR is the compliance of the countries of the region with the principle of "open regionalism", which creates favourable conditions for the establishment of relations of the region with external actors. Such "openness" greatly facilitates the access of non-regional countries, such as Ukraine, to the EAR markets.⁵

Among the countries of Northeast Asia, Ukraine's relations with **China** (PRC), Japan, and South Korea are the most dynamically developing. Today, China is the world's largest exporter and the world's biggest (by purchasing power parity) economy. Ukraine and the PRC are strategic partners, as enshrined in the Joint Declaration of 2011. A wide treaty basis for bilateral relations was established, which consists of 246 international documents. In December

2013, a basic *Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation* between Ukraine and the PRC was signed, in which key principles and achievements of the bilateral relations as well as aspiration for active development of mutually beneficial cooperation in all spheres are laid out. The implementation of the first Strategic Partnership Program for 2014-2018 is completed. Mutual interest in developing trade-economic, scientific, military-technical, and humanitarian cooperation, absence of problem issues in the relations, and the proximity of positions on urgent international problems are the fundamentals for intensive dialogue.



Proximity of positions on many topical international issues, the absence of problems in the relations, and the unequivocal support of Ukraine by Japan contribute to the effective implementation of the significant potential of Ukrainian-Japanese cooperation

The third largest by the amount of GDP country in the world is **Japan**, which considers Ukraine a large and important Eastern European state, taking into account its geopolitical location, considerable resources, and qualifications of the population⁶. There is a mutual interest in developing cooperation in the areas of trade and investment, science and technology, infrastructure, industry, agriculture, and energy-saving technologies. Proximity of positions on many topical international

4 I. Лоссовський, *Україна в системі двосторонніх відносин з країнами Азійсько-Тихоокеанського регіону (Ukraine in the System of Bilateral Relations with Countries of the Asia-Pacific Region)*, [in:] Г.М.Перепелиця (ed.), *Зовнішня політика України. Стратегічні оцінки, прогнози та пріоритети (Foreign Policy of Ukraine: Strategic Assessments, Prognoses and Priorities)*, Київ: Видавничий дім «Стилос», 2013, pp. 266-283.

5 I.Є. Лоссовський, *Деякі перспективи економічних відносин України з державами азійсько-тихоокеанського регіону (Some Prospects of Economic Relations of Ukraine with Asia-Pacific Region's States)*, "Актуальні проблеми міжнародних відносин" (Topical problems of international relations), Vol. 112, (No. 1), 2013, pp. 20-28.

6 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine [www.mfa.gov.ua].

issues, the absence of problems in the relations, and the unequivocal support of Ukraine by Japan contribute to the effective implementation of the significant potential of Ukrainian-Japanese cooperation and lay a solid foundation for the fruitful development of the entire complex of relations. The first visit of the prime minister of Japan to Ukraine in June 2015 marked this bilateral trend.

As for Ukraine's cooperation with **the Republic of Korea**, the former considers the latter an important trading and economic partner, and Korea considers Ukraine a promising centre for investment in Central and Eastern Europe. South Korea ranks second among Ukraine's trade partners in the EAR after China. The parties identified the following priority directions of cooperation: energy, space exploration, transport, agriculture, shipbuilding, aircraft, engineering, construction.

The most economically, financially, and socially developed country of the SEA is the city-state of **Singapore**, a representative of the "ASEAN-6" group – the "old" members of the association (it also includes Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines). This country has been ranked first or second in the world for the last decade by a wide range of indicators of economic development. Despite small territory, high population density, lack of its own reserves of water and other natural resources, and dependence on the import of energy and food, Singapore has unique economic and social achievements: one of the most favourable investment climates and business-friendly environments in the world, a high level of social development and well-being. According to the ratings of "ease of doing business" in 2018, Singapore

ranked second in the world (Ukraine, respectively – 71) out of 140 countries⁷, and second in the "index of economic freedom" (Ukraine – 134) out of 178 countries⁸ of the world.

The economies of Ukraine and Singapore have a high degree of complementarity. Considerable areas of fertile land and developed agriculture in Ukraine create a potential for mutually beneficial cooperation, taking into account the great financial, technological, and innovative capabilities of Singapore. In order to ensure effective implementation of these opportunities, a significant improvement of the investment climate in Ukraine is needed. However, in the context of the ongoing global financial and economic crisis, as well as the complicated political, security, and economic situation in Ukraine, Singapore and other "new Asian tigers" of SEA focus on investments in their sub-region and the wider Asia-Pacific region (APR), which are characterized by higher economic and political stability.

Indonesia is the largest country in the SEA and the largest Muslim country in the world; with a population of about 264 million, it is ranked fourth in the world. The country is rich in minerals, including oil and gas, iron ore, tin, bauxite and aluminium, nickel and manganese; it is the fourth largest trading partner of Ukraine in the EAR and the biggest in SEA. Ukrainian-Indonesian trade and economic relations have a steady upward trend. Indonesian economy is one of the most dynamic economies in the EAR and, given the trend of active infrastructure development, opens up prospects for Ukrainian producers of metallurgy and construction industries, the introduction of Ukrainian technologies in machine-building, aircraft and shipbuilding.

7 Rankings & Ease of Doing Business Score - 2018. World Bank. <http://www.doingbusiness.org/en/rankings>

8 2018 Index of Economic Freedom. The Heritage Foundation. <https://www.heritage.org/international-economies/commentary/2018-index-economic-freedom>

Ukraine is considering the development of relations with **Thailand** in trade-economic and other areas of mutual interest as a promising direction of its foreign policy in SEA. Ukraine, with its economic, agrarian, scientific, and military-technical potential, practical experience of cooperation with the countries of the Euro-Asian space, and the extensive transport infrastructure, in particular, seaports, can become an important partner of Thailand in its entry into the markets of post-Soviet countries and the EU. Recent years have shown that Ukraine and Thailand have significant potential for deepening cooperation: The annual trade turnover over the last decade has been growing. Thai market is one of the largest in SEA for Ukrainian exports, in particular, metallurgical and military-technical products.

One of the promising directions of cooperation between Ukraine and the countries of SEA is energy. Over the past 50 years, with the participation of Soviet and Ukrainian specialists, dozens of hydroelectric plants (HPPs) and thermal power stations have been built in **Vietnam** and in other regional countries. Cooperation between Ukraine and Vietnam is characterized by the highest level of interaction in this particular and some other areas. Over the years of independence, Ukrainian enterprises made significant contributions to the design and construction of new and the reconstruction of five previously built HPPs in Vietnam. Bilateral cooperation in trade, mining, energy, medical and pharmaceutical, agricultural, transport, and other industries is also promising. Consultations were held on the prospects of signing a bilateral Free Trade Agreement. Agreements have been reached on the participation of Ukrainian enterprises in joint projects in Vietnam in metallurgy, shipbuilding, and energy.

This country is interested in deepening cooperation in the field of defence, especially with the modernization of military equipment, in particular the AN-26 aircraft of the Vietnam Air Forces. Experience of Ukrainian specialists is highly evaluated in construction of nuclear power plants (NPPs) and hydroelectric plants. One of the Ukrainian specialized design institutes commissioned by the Vietnamese side is working on the development of project documentation for the construction of the first NPP in Vietnam.

Cooperation with Multilateral Formats

The growing activity of multilateral institutions operating in the region is a reflection of the global trend towards collective development of important international decisions. The tendency to deepen the integration processes in the EAR will be strengthened. However, unlike the European region, the Asian space is not homogeneous in the cultural, ideological, and political senses. Its various sub-regions and countries have significant peculiarities, which is the reason for the growth of the number of multilateral forums. At the same time, there is no single comprehensive multi-dimensional security organization in the region, like the OSCE in the Euro-Atlantic area⁹.

A characteristic feature of the international processes in the EAR is that the dominant tendency is sub-regional integration, which is more dynamic and structured than the overall regional one. An evidence of this is the example of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the most comprehensive, well developed, numerous in terms of participants, and authoritative

⁹ С. Шергін, І. Лоссовський, *Росія в азійсько-тихоокеанській інтеграції: погляд з Києва та Владивостока* (Russia in Asia-Pacific Integration: View from Kyiv and Vladivostok), "Зовнішні справи" (UA Foreign Affairs), No. 9, 2012, pp.16-21; No. 10, pp. 30-35.

sub-regional organization for integration¹⁰. The aggregate annual GDP of the SEA countries (close to 2.5 trillion USD) puts ASEAN at the sixth-seventh position among the world's largest economies and third in Asia (after China and Japan).

The ASEAN has established a broad-based system of dialogue partnerships with leading countries of the world, including the United States, China, the European Union, Japan, India, Australia, South Korea, and Russia. It plays an important constructive role as the political integration core for a number of influential international forums: Asia-Europe (ASEM), ASEAN Regional Forum, and East Asian Summit - EAS (ASEAN + 6 + USA + Russia), ASEAN + 3 (China, Japan, Republic of Korea). In all these international institutions, ASEAN has the so-called "driver's seat", which means that the Association defines the rules of the game. This allows balancing the interests and influences of great powers in the region and alleviating the potential risks of sub-regional domination. This is one of the main peculiarities of multilateral interaction in the EAR.

In the near future, Ukraine's relations with the ASEAN (if possible at the level of dialogue partnerships) and its member states need to be significantly enhanced, to actively monitor the activities of the association and to deepen contacts with its executive bodies located in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta. The ASEAN has declared its intentions by 2020 to create a "ternary community" (economic, cultural, and security). Ukraine faces important tasks of working out an

optimal concept of interaction with this leading integration structure of the region, defining directions and areas of effective interaction with the association.

Despite considerable potential for cooperation in some practical fields, it should be noted that the current state of economic cooperation between Ukraine and the SEA is not satisfactory. This is supported by rather modest volumes of annual trade between Ukraine and the countries of ASEAN, which in the best years fluctuated around 2 billion USD. For comparison, the total trade turnover of the ASEAN countries in the post-crisis 2010 with China was 232 billion USD (in 2012 – 400 billion USD, in 2014 – 500 billion USD); with Japan – 213 billion USD; with the EU – 210 billion USD; with the USA – 187 billion USD; with the Republic of Korea – 97 billion USD (in 2018 – 160 billion USD); with Russia – 9 billion USD (in 2011 – 15 billion USD)¹¹. The situation in the investment is not encouraging, as the official site of the State Statistics Service of Ukraine does not record any significant investments.

In 1997, with the purpose of developing trans-regional cooperation, the Asia-Europe Forum – ASEM – was created. Until the expansion of the forum in 2010 (due to Russia, Australia, and New Zealand), the criteria for its membership have been formed: the country's geographical location in Europe or Asia, the existence of close political and economic ties with ASEM countries, the ability to contribute to the development of the forum, and the approval of the nominations by the countries of their

10 І. Лоссовський, *Україна в системі двосторонніх відносин з країнами Азійсько-Тихоокеанського регіону (Ukraine in the System of Bilateral Relations with Countries of the Asia-Pacific Region)*, [in:] Г.М.Перепелиця (ed.), *Зовнішня політика України. Стратегічні оцінки, прогнози та пріоритети (Foreign Policy of Ukraine: Strategic Assessments, Prognoses and Priorities)*, Київ: Видавничий дім «Стилос», 2013, pp. 266-283.

11 Г.М. Костюнина, *Интеграционная модель АСЕАН+1: основные положения соглашений и влияние на внешнеэкономические связи (The Integration Model of ASEAN+1: Main Provisions of the Agreements and the Impact on Foreign Economic Relations)*, "Вестник РУДН. Серия: Международные Отношения", Vol. 17, No. 3, 2017, pp. 441-457 [https://mgimo.ru/upload/iblock/bc7/16758-17131-1-ПВ.pdf].

area. Today, ASEM consists of the European Commission, the ASEAN Secretariat, and 51 countries, among which are EU members, ASEAN, ASEAN + 3 partners, India, Mongolia, Pakistan, Australia, New Zealand, Russia; Bangladesh, Norway, and Switzerland; Croatia and Kazakhstan (joined in 2014). The last phases of expansion of ASEM resulted in a “dilution” of membership requirements, in particular the specified geographical criterion. Therefore, it seems appropriate to consider possible prospects of Ukraine’s participation in ASEM. Statements by Ukrainian officials about interest in participating in ASEM were made during meetings in the framework of the forum in 2014 in Milan.

Further Strategies

Russia’s factor, despite the actual state of war with Ukraine, is important in the long-term strategy of Ukraine’s cooperation with the EAR because it reduces the negative impact of the geographical remoteness of our country from this region. This potentially creates opportunities for Ukraine to become part of the trans-regional megaproject of the “Silk Road”, which will unite China, the Korean Peninsula, and Russia with Europe through Ukraine. However, this does not remove the non-regional status of Ukraine in the EAR and the related difficulties for active development of practical cooperation, since in accordance with the charter provisions of the multilateral economic institutions in the EAR, non-regional countries, as a rule, are not granted the status of full or associate members.

The experience of post-Soviet countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan), which in various forms are actively developing relations with the countries of the EAR region, in particular, in the format of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), is also worth taking into account. In 2012, Ukraine declared interest in entering the markets of the Asian region with high-

tech products and, for this purpose, to gain the observer status in the SCO. In future, one should not exclude this possibility.

Countries of the EAR are large consumers of corn; they account for a significant part of its world imports. Ukraine, as a major exporter of this product, could intensify cooperation with the region in this direction using its developed port-transport and logistics infrastructure.



There is a possibility to enter the SEA markets for Ukrainian aviation builders

Despite considerable prospects, it is necessary to state the relatively small amount of trade, economic, and other practical cooperation of Ukraine with the countries of the EAR, which does not allow moving relations to a higher level. In the meantime, to achieve a more active presence of Ukrainian business in the region, to ensure increase in volumes of trade and credit support of Ukrainian enterprises, it would be appropriate to establish a consortium of Ukrainian exporters and importers to optimize the activity in the markets of the region.

There is a possibility to enter the SEA markets for Ukrainian aviation builders. To this end, Ukrainian-made aircrafts of the AN-148 and AN-158 classes should be actively promoted to the region’s market.

The cooperation of Ukraine with individual countries of the region in the space sphere also has great prospects. In 2000, the first Malaysian remote sensing satellite TiungSAT-1 was taken to the near-Earth orbit by the Ukrainian rocket launcher Dnipro-1. In 2009, the Malaysian telecommunication satellite MEASAT-3a was launched to orbit from the Baikonur

launch site with the Ukrainian rocket launcher Zenit-3SLB. Taking into account rocket-building capacities of Ukraine, the continuation of activities in this area with a view to consolidating the aerospace services market in SEA is very promising.

An important strategic objective may be signing of an agreement between Ukraine and the ASEAN on free trade, as well as making such agreements with individual members of the Association. For SEA countries, expanding cooperation with Ukraine would facilitate access to some high technologies, products of the agricultural, chemical, and metallurgical industries, and the high-capacity domestic market of our state.

Promising and mutually beneficial is the renovation and development of Ukraine's ties with the ASEAN-4 group, the "new" members of the Association (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar), with which there were close ties during the time of the Soviet Union. Ukraine had made a significant contribution to the development of relations of the USSR with these countries. Experience and memory of the mutually beneficial cooperation in the past serve as a positive factor contributing to the development of interaction at the present stage, as well as for planning the development of practical relations with the "old" Association members (ASEAN-6), countries more developed in socio-economic and democratic dimensions.

In the ASEAN-4 countries, a significant number of graduates from universities of the former USSR, including Ukraine, hold key positions in economy, public administration, private business, and science. These people

can play a constructive lobbying role. It is also promising to continue and expand attracting students from the countries of SEA to study in Ukraine.

Taking into account the experience of Ukraine in implementing large infrastructure projects, in particular, during preparation for Euro 2012, our country is able to offer its services in upgrading highways and railways, seaports and airports, construction of subway, sports, and other infrastructure in certain countries of SEA.

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Issue 1 (15), 2019

ISSN 2518-7481