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UKRAINIAN FOREIGN POLICY BEYOND THE EU AND NATO INTEGRATION: LESSONS STILL TO LEARN

Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism”

Since 2015, the Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism” has been producing a comprehensive analysis of foreign policy¹ performance by major Ukrainian public agencies, the parliament, and non-governmental institutions. The annual assessment covers all specific areas that form the necessary preconditions for effective and result-oriented foreign policy.

To reach a goal in the foreign policy domain, one needs to possess sufficient political will, generate strategic vision adequate to realities on the ground, secure strong inter-agency bonds and cooperation, as well as translate plans into real deeds. Seemingly, a very simple algorithm of policy drafting and execution appears sometimes to be a daunting task for policy-makers, which, in the end of the day, leads to drastic underperforming in the foreign policy domain.

Political Will to Act

Here one needs to mention that the general impression of the Ukrainian external affairs track is rather positive for rank-and-file Ukrainians and observers from abroad. That is predominately due to the intensive activities of Ukrainian authorities along the four main priorities on foreign policy agenda. It is important to indicate that at the 13th Ukrainian Ambassadorial Meeting, which took place in August 2018, the President of Ukraine singled out the following priorities:

keeping and enhancing the transatlantic coalition to support Ukraine, countering Russian aggression; European and Euro-Atlantic integration as ways of guaranteeing Ukraine’s security; value-based economic diplomacy; and actions to hold Russia legally accountable for its actions according to the international law. These above-mentioned topics were pointed out by the President of Ukraine, Ukrainian Prime Minister and governmental team, the Foreign Minister, and MPs during numerous international meetings and addresses.

Having all these topics as a reference point, experts show that the least attention coming from the political actors was paid to the regions of MENA, Latin America, and Central Asia, climate change, and international security issues.

One might argue that a more detailed position regarding separate geographic or functional directions of the country’s foreign policy is traditionally presented in the analytical report to the Annual Address of the President of Ukraine to the Parliament 2018. However, it is difficult to state how exactly the National Institute for Strategic Studies’ expert propositions correlate with the political position of President P. Poroshenko and, thus, to what extent they are considered as an action plan for the MFA and other public bodies.

1 Ukrainian Prism: Foreign Policy Scorecards. <http://prismua.org>

In Search of a Concerted and Strategic Foreign Policy

The same approach might be traced in the Ukrainian inter-agency coordination efforts. In general, according to experts, the highest coordination in Ukraine's foreign policy in 2018 was implemented in the following directions: Belarus, the United Kingdom, Lithuania, economic cooperation with the EU, Euro-Atlantic integration, and public diplomacy. Despite some initiatives launched in the regions of Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa, the lack of domestic cooperation regarding these regions was present.

In 2018, the scope of Ukraine's strategic documents determining the country's foreign policy and creating relevant instruments to counter Russian aggression was replenished. On the one hand, elaboration of concepts and strategies in separate directions of foreign policy is a positive development. On the other hand, there have been no practical steps at the official level with regard to developing a single unified document of strategic level in the sphere of foreign policy.

Among positive developments that went further than merely outlining strategic visions vis-à-vis the EU, USA, and NATO, one has to name the second stage of developing the Export Strategy of Ukraine – Strategic Trade Development Road Map 2017-2021, within whose frames sector and cross-sector export strategies should be developed. In the same line we consider the approval of the Strategy of the Development of the Military and Industrial Complex of Ukraine until 2028, which envisages Ukraine's bigger presence at world markets, active promotion of new modern arms and military equipment made in Ukraine at the foreign market.

The State Program of Cooperation with Ukrainians Worldwide until 2020 determines the tasks that are to be

implemented by providing financial support to diaspora communities (using the funds of Ukraine's state and local budgets).

Unfortunately, the majority of geographic and functional foreign policy directions remained without medium-term plans or mentioning in strategic documents, which in its turn has a negative impact on developing and implementing efficient and fruitful policy. According to the experts, there is almost a lack of strategic frames when it comes to relations with France, Hungary, Iran, Asia-Pacific, Latin America, Central Asia, as well as international security issues and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Proactive Foreign Policy

According to the results of expert reviews of the country's foreign policy in 49 directions in 2018, Ukraine takes a proactive stand, constantly increases and diversifies official contacts, and improves its foreign policy instruments. High scores are observed in the domains of interaction with G7, EU, NATO, and OSCE, both as multilateral platforms and with individual members. One should add here the cooperation with separate neighbouring non-EU and non-NATO countries, such as Belarus, Moldova, and Georgia.

As for the regions, Ukraine's efforts were more intensive when it came to the Baltic countries and Northern Europe, as well as in the Middle East. It is worth noting that in March 2018, P. Poroshenko made the first in 15 years presidential visit to Kuwait and visited Qatar as well. Visits to Saudi Arabia and the UAE became important steps to give a boost to Ukraine's presence in the region.

As for economic diplomacy, 2018 saw an enhanced practice of trade missions visiting other countries. At the beginning of April, the first Ukrainian trade mission to Ghana and Nigeria took place. Trade missions to Israel and Turkey were also undertaken.

Yet, an extremely low level of activity can be observed in the regions of Central Asia, Latin America, and Sub-Saharan Africa, Iran and China.

Results and Expectations: Beyond the Priorities

Against this backdrop, the results of foreign policy performance in 2018 are mixed if we put aside the above-mentioned core priorities.

Ukrainian authorities were quite successful in forming an international coalition of partners to support the country's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Much was achieved in the UN framework even though Ukraine is no longer a non-permanent member of the SC. In general, international political and legal support for Ukraine in fighting Russian aggression is getting bigger; yet, some influential regional and global leaders (Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, India, China, Mexico, Nigeria, and South Africa) are far from being in the focus of Ukrainian diplomacy attention. The results of work in the regions of South Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Central Asia are traditionally low, which points to the necessity of a more active and thorough policy coming from the Ukrainian diplomatic team. Against this backdrop, it is interesting that Ukraine provided humanitarian aid to Yemen, the Republic of Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo in order to help overcome famine.

As for achievements in the sphere of economic diplomacy, first of all it is important to mention the government's work on reviewing and optimizing instruments of joint intergovernmental committees. There is a positive dynamic when it comes to economic and trade contacts; for instance, an agreement was signed with Qatar on launching a joint committee on economic, trade, and technical cooperation.

On November 21, Ukraine's Cabinet of Ministers approved a free trade agreement with Israel, while the free trade agreement between Ukraine and Turkey has not been finalized yet despite the promise of both countries' authorities to do it before the end of 2018.

In the area of parliamentary diplomacy 2018, the Verkhovna Rada additionally launched three groups on interparliamentary relations, having increased the general number of such groups to 94. Another crucial step was a creation of the "Georgia-Moldova-Ukraine" Interparliamentary Assembly.



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According to the experts, the highest results were achieved following Ukraine's diplomatic efforts in the UN and the Council of Europe. Its political dialogue with the European Union has also been highly rated. The lowest scores were given to the results of the Ukrainian foreign policy towards Iran and in the region of Central Asia. The average score that demonstrates considerable untapped potential of Ukraine's foreign policy was received for the following: economic diplomacy, cooperation with the European Energy Community, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, Visegrad Four and the Black Sea region, as well as all issues of multilateral diplomacy (protection of human rights, climate change, international security, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, etc.).

How to Balance and Streamline the Foreign Policy of Ukraine

In order to intensify and balance Ukraine's foreign policy performance in the "forgotten" regions and functional domains, the experts

recommend to the Ukrainian policy-makers, inter alia, to focus on the following important steps:

1. The President of Ukraine and the Ukrainian foreign policy team have to develop Ukraine's Foreign Policy Strategy until 2025. As an integral part of it, regional and thematic (functional) roadmaps/policies should be designed. Ukraine needs such regional roadmaps for the Middle East, the Black Sea region, Asia-Pacific, Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, peacekeeping activities, and more.

2. It is necessary to strengthen work with global and regional leaders that are not in the focus of the Ukrainian authorities now. These include Brazil, Egypt, Israel, India, Morocco, Kazakhstan, China, South Africa, Peru, and others.

3. The MFA and the Parliament should audit existing instruments of bilateral cooperation, define positive and challenging aspects, and outline best practices that can be used in relations with other countries.

4. To foster economic diplomacy, it is crucial to complete the second stage of outlining sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies as part of the Export Strategy of Ukraine.

5. Given the positive experience of setting up budgets for public diplomacy, trips of Ukrainian experts, and international cultural events, the MFA leadership and MPs should envisage respective funding for commissioning outsourced expertise to cover the needs of the MFA geographic departments.

The Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism" is a network-based non-governmental analytical center, the goal of which is to participate in providing democratic ground for developing and implementation of foreign and security policies by government authorities of Ukraine, implementation of international and nation-wide projects and programs, directed at improvement of foreign policy analysis and expertise, enhancement of expert community participation in a decision-making process in the spheres of foreign policy, international relations, public diplomacy.

UKRAINE AND CHINA: GROWING MUTUAL INTEREST AMIDST INCREASING INTERNATIONAL TURBULENCE

Sergiy Gerasymchuk

Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism"

The article focuses on the ups and downs in the bilateral China-Ukraine relations, explains the gaps in the bilateral political dialogue after the Revolution of Dignity in 2013-2014, and outlines priority areas for cooperation, including economic cooperation. Besides, the most successful projects and initiatives are mentioned and promising areas of cooperation are discussed. However, risks rooted in the deterioration of China and the West relations are also tackled, and recommendations for a balanced foreign policy of Ukraine towards China are suggested.

Shaping Ukrainian foreign policy towards China is a challenging task nowadays. First, the history of the bilateral relations had both high and low points. Promising periods in the bilateral relations were often followed by periods of mutual frustration and disappointment. Sustainability of political relations remains fragile, mostly depending on high-level political dialogue and on the relations between the leaders of the two states. However, it is impossible to ignore the fact of the growing Chinese presence in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, Chinese regional initiatives including the global "Silk Road Economic Belt" (further known as "One Belt One Road" and "Belt and Road Initiative") and the regional "16+1" format. Also, there is a necessity to consider the growth of trade and economic ties, Chinese interest in Ukraine's high-tech and agricultural potential, Chinese vocal expectations to establish a free trade area and visa-free regime with Ukraine.

Consideration of the mentioned trends is a necessary prerequisite for shaping effective and efficient policies towards Beijing. Above and beyond, Ukraine has to consider the vital necessity of finding a balance between Beijing, Brussels, Berlin, and Washington. If previously the growing Chinese presence at the European markets was perceived by European leaders and business as an opportunity to fuel European economies with investments, in the recent years, disapproval can be observed; the EU and the United States criticize China for the lack of reciprocity in opening up its markets, assertive attempts to gain control over critical infrastructure objects, lack of transparency of the Chinese companies' procurement procedures.

Under such circumstances, Kyiv has to apply its efforts to find an appropriate approach for engaging Chinese investments while preserving Ukrainian national interests

and avoiding steps that may eventually hurt interests of other global players and Ukraine's Western allies in the region.

Background of the Current Ukraine-China Relations: Ups And Downs, Missed Opportunities and Promising Initiatives

Attempts to develop relations with China and simultaneously to proceed with the European and Euro-Atlantic integration have already been made by Ukraine under the presidency of Leonid Kuchma (1994-2005). Engaging China economically and politically, perceiving Beijing as an important partner in the international arena was rooted in the multi-vector foreign policy applied by President Kuchma. He paid



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several visits to China – in December 1995 and in November 2002. On 03 April 2003, at the meeting in Beijing between President Hu Jintao and President Kuchma, China's head of state officially declared Ukraine to be a key partner in Eastern Europe.¹ Presumably, Kuchma was trying to engage China as a counterbalance to both Russia and the EU. At the same time, China was developing its strategy towards Europe and benefited from strong diplomatic and economic ties with the country, which was simultaneously

a close partner to the EU and Russia. Moreover, China also had direct interest in the Ukrainian military-industrial complex.

The relations between the two countries became less dynamic in the time of Kuchma's successor, Viktor Yushchenko (2005-2010). One of the key reasons for the deterioration of the bilateral relations was, on the one hand, the openly pro-Western preferences declared by President Yushchenko alongside with breaking ties with the Russian Federation (whereas the Chinese side cautiously avoided questioning the Russian role in the post-Soviet space)².

However, even more challenging for the relations between the two countries was the fact that Ukrainian officials invited high-ranking Taiwanese officials to attend a semi-official international conference in late 2005, leading to a stalling in senior-level exchanges during the Viktor Yushchenko administration³. Since that time and up to the current moment, China consistently supports Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and expected Ukraine in manner of reciprocity to be committed to the "one China" policy. Sensitivity of China about this issue is only growing and therefore has to be considered by the Ukrainian politicians if they expect further fruitful cooperation with Beijing.

The presidency of Viktor Yanukovich (2010-2014) led to a new U-turn in the bilateral contacts. In the beginning of his term, Yanukovich was trying to conceal his pro-Russian sentiments by exploiting Kuchma's legacy of the multi-vector policy (although

- 1 Z. Liu, *The Analysis of the Relationship between China and Ukraine*, China-CEEC Think Tanks' Network, 11 January 2018 [<http://16plus1-thinktank.com/1/20160111/1095.html> access: 16 June 2018].
- 2 A. Goncharuk, E. Hobova, V. Kiktenko, O. Koval, S. Koshovy, *Foreign Policy Audit. How to Revive Ukrainian-Chinese Relations*, "Euromaidan Press", 07 December 2016 [<http://euromaidanpress.com/2016/12/07/ukraine-china-international-relations-silk-road-trade/> access: 16 December 2018].
- 3 Y. Dong, *Ukraine and Chinese Investment: Caution Amid Potential?*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, 06 December 2017 [<https://www.fpri.org/article/2017/09/ukraine-chinese-investment-caution-amid-potential/> access: 16 December 2018].

the contacts with China were mostly utilized to justify objections to the Western norms and values that Yanukovych did not share).

Both in 2011 and in 2013, there were exchanges of state visits of the Chinese and Ukrainian leaders accompanied by signing of important bilateral documents – e.g. a joint statement upgrading the countries' friendly and cooperative relations to a strategic partnership.⁴ An important content of the China-Ukraine strategic partnership was support to each other on issues concerning national sovereignty, reunification, and territorial integrity. The two sides agreed that cooperation in the fields of trade and economy, investment, science and technology, aviation, aerospace, agriculture, and infrastructure construction is a priority in the future development of bilateral relations.⁵

In the course of the Chinese President's visit to Ukraine in June 2011, the Joint Declaration on Establishment and Development of Strategic Partnership Relations between Ukraine and China was signed. The visit of the President of Ukraine in December 2013 was marked with signing the Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation between Ukraine and the People's Republic of China, the Joint Declaration on Further Deepening of Strategic Partnership Relations between Ukraine and the People's Republic of China, and the Program of Development of Strategic Partnership Relations between Ukraine and the People's Republic of China for the years 2014-2018. The parties agreed to strengthen high-level exchanges and to enhance strategic mutual trust as well as to enhance the role of the China-Ukraine Inter-

governmental Cooperation Committee, to strengthen cooperation in the fields of agriculture, energy resources, infrastructure construction, finance, and high-tech. Ukraine also expressed its readiness to join the "Silk Road Economic Belt". The Chinese side expresses welcome for this and is ready to discuss relevant cooperation with the Ukrainian side.⁶



Although the dynamics of the bilateral contacts was low in 2015-2016, in 2017 there was a breakthrough in the relations

However, the timing was not favourable considering the fact that the visit took place already in the period of mass manifestations in Ukraine further known as the Revolution of Dignity, followed by the fall of the Yanukovych regime. China is known for prioritizing contacts between leaders and for sensitivity towards revolutionary movements, which are often perceived in Beijing with a certain suspicion. In this regard, the promising declarations had low chances for implementation in a short-term period.

Engaging China – Assessment of the Efforts of the Current Ukrainian Political Leadership

Notwithstanding the circumstances of the fall of President Yanukovych, further development of the relations between the two states continued under President Poroshenko. Interestingly, despite close political ties with the Russian Federation and

4 Z. Liu, *The Analysis of the Relationship between China and Ukraine*, China-CEEC Think Tanks' Network, 11 January 2018 [<http://16plus1-thinktank.com/1/20160111/1095.html> access: 16 June 2018].

5 Z. Liu, *The Analysis of the Relationship between China and Ukraine*, China-CEEC Think Tanks' Network, 11 January 2018 [<http://16plus1-thinktank.com/1/20160111/1095.html> access: 16 June 2018].

6 Xi Jinping Holds Talks with President Viktor Yanukovich of Ukraine, the Two Heads of State Agree to Further Deepen China-Ukraine Strategic Partnership, Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Kingdom of Norway, 06 December 2013 [<http://www.chinese-embassy.no/eng/zyxw/t1107553.htm> access: 14 December, 2018].

sensitivity towards the Russian role in the region, China was one of the first countries in mid-March 2014 to propose a peaceful settlement of the “Crimean issue” in the form of an international coordination mechanism, which had to include all stakeholders. These calls and China’s position, however, were ignored by Kyiv, its Western partners, and Russia.⁷

Although the dynamics of the bilateral contacts was low in 2015-2016, in 2017 there was a breakthrough in the relations. After the meeting of the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko with the Chinese leader Xi Jinping at the beginning of 2017 (in the framework of Davos World Economic Forum), the parties agreed to resume activities of the Ukraine-China Intergovernmental Cooperation Commission and, indeed, on 05 December 2017, Ukraine’s First Deputy Premier and Minister for Economic Development and Trade Stepan Kubiv and China’s Vice-Premier Ma Kai launched the third session of the respective commission. It is worth mentioning that the scheduled time of the commission’s meeting was 2015 but both parties took the time before formal steps on enhancing cooperation. However, the meeting of the leaders in Davos was an indicator for the respective agencies of both countries to proceed with practical steps.

At a meeting with Vice-Premier of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China Ma Kai in December 2017, President Poroshenko assessed the results of the Commission’s third session as positive, confirming Ukraine’s interest in continuing involvement in China’s “One Belt, One Road”

initiative, in relation to which Ukraine’s priority is to include Chinese technological possibilities and capital in the development of the country’s economy. The Ukrainian side also took this opportunity to highlight the importance of China’s consistent position with regards to respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and not recognizing Russia’s temporary occupation of the Ukrainian territory in Crimea.

In addition, according to the announcement made by Vice-Premier Ma Kai, China assigned USD 7 billion for cooperation with Ukraine, and this sum can be increased in case of a successful implementation of projects (although none of the documents signed in December 2017 mentions specific investments, and the Action Plan has just general phrases about deepening the cooperation in certain areas without any reference to the specific projects).⁸ During the meeting, Poroshenko handed over an invitation to President Xi to visit Ukraine⁹, although the probability of such a visit is low – the Chinese leadership will rather wait for the results of the presidential elections in Ukraine in 2019 and only afterwards will make a decision.

Political interest towards China in 2018 was repeatedly expressed at the level of the executive and legislative institutions of Ukraine. The 2018 *Analytical Report to the Annual Address of the President of Ukraine to the Verkhovna Rada* draws attention to global projects of the People’s Republic of China, in particular to the fact that 56% of all Chinese foreign investments were directed to countries taking part in the New Silk

7 A. Goncharuk, E. Hobova, V. Kiktenko, O. Koval, S. Koshovy, *Foreign Policy Audit. How to Revive Ukrainian-Chinese Relations*, “Euromaidan Press”, 07 December 2016 [<http://euromaidanpress.com/2016/12/07/ukraine-china-international-relations-silk-road-trade/> access: 16 December 2018].

8 *Ukrainian Prism: Foreign Policy 2017*, Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism”, 2017 [http://prismua.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/A5-prizma2017_eng_web.pdf access: 09 February 2019].

9 A. Honcharuk, V. Kiktenko, *Ukraine–China Relations*, Ukrainian Association of Sinologists, 04 April 2018 [<http://sinologist.com.ua/en/honcharuk-kiktenko-v-ukraine-china-relations-november-2017-february-2018-truman-index-2018-2-6-p-14-19/> access: 02 February 2018].

Road project. The document also mentions China's regional initiatives, especially the "16+1" format, and suggests that Ukraine should join the initiative.¹⁰

On the one hand, efforts in this regard, if successful, may result in explicit demonstration of China's interest towards Ukraine as an actor in the region of Central and Eastern Europe. However, on the other hand, the Ukrainian government has to take into consideration the growing suspicions of Berlin and Brussels, who allegedly believe that the primary goal of the Chinese initiative goes far beyond pure economic cooperation. The respective policies of Germany should be taken as a sample in the process of the decision-making related to the Ukrainian engagement in the initiative, and, probably, the status of an observer in the Initiative has to be gained first.

Constant Economic Interests

Despite the ups and downs in the political dialogue, the lack of high-level bilateral contacts, and delays in implementing political declarations, some spheres of the bilateral cooperation were in the focus of the economic actors notwithstanding the personalities of the leaders both in China and in Ukraine. That is no surprise since for Ukraine China is an important economic partner and the Chinese interest in Ukraine is also gradually growing.

According to the statistics of bilateral trade, after some slowdown in 2015, the gradual

growth in the bilateral trade turnover is being observed. In 2013, the trade turnover was at the level of USD 10,627,431; in 2014 – USD 8,085,079; in 2015 – USD 6,170,070. In 2016 and 2017, gradual growth was observed – USD 6,520,216 and USD 7,688,002 respectively.



The area of the primary interest of the Chinese state has been the Ukrainian military-industrial complex

During 2018, bilateral trade in goods between Ukraine and China increased to USD 8.8 billion. According to First Vice-Prime Minister Stepan Kubiv, in five years Ukraine and China plan to bring this figure up to USD 10 billion a year.¹¹

The area of the primary interest of the Chinese state has been the Ukrainian military-industrial complex. China has always been interested in the technologies and hi-tech products Ukraine was able to provide, whereas Ukrainian producers were interested in the huge Chinese market.¹² China has purchased from Ukraine ships, tanks, aircrafts and an aircraft carrier, different types of power systems for aircraft carriers and large ships, supersonic advanced training aircraft, key equipment for tank engines and air-to-air missiles, as

10 Аналітична доповідь до щорічного Послання Президента України до Верховної Ради України "Про внутрішнє та зовнішнє становище України в 2018 році" (Analytical Report to the President's Address to Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine "Regarding the Internal and External Situation in 2018"), National Institute for Strategic Studies, 2018 [http://www.niss.gov.ua/public/File/Analit_Dopovid_Poslannia_2018.pdf access: 05 March 2019].

11 Україна та Китай наростили товарообіг між країнами до \$8,8 мільярда — Кубів (Ukraine and China Increased Bilateral Trade to \$8.8 Billion – Kubiv), "Business.ua", 25 January 2019 [<https://business.ua/news/item/4547-ukraina-ta-kytai-narostyly-tovaroobih-mizh-krainamy-do-usd8-8-miliarda-kubiv>].

12 I. Ava-Pointon, *The Dragon and the Trident: A Quick Introduction to Sino-Ukrainian Relations in the Era of the New Silk Roads*, "The Sundial Press", 10 May 2018 [<http://www.sundialpress.co/2018/05/10/dragon-trident-quick-introduction-sino-ukrainian-relations-era-new-silk-roads/> access: 13 February, 2019].

well as engines for high-altitude helicopters.¹³ Ukraine has played a significant role in China's military modernization.

Moreover, Chinese civil programs also benefited from cooperation with the Ukrainian counterparts. For example, the "Snow Dragon"/"Xue Long" icebreaker, which plays a crucial role in the implementation of the Chinese Polar Strategy, was also purchased from Ukraine.¹⁴

Another hi-tech cooperation field is space-related industrial cooperation. Political contacts in 2017 resulted in the renewed Ukraine and China program of cooperation in the space sphere until 2020. The respective agreement ensures implementation of more than 70 projects, most of which are implemented under the umbrella of the Chinese ambitious Moon program and mission on the research of the Solar System as well as creation of new materials and remote sensing of the Earth.¹⁵

Yet, one traditional field of cooperation that has been developing, despite the political turmoil either in Ukraine or in the bilateral relations, is cooperation in the field of agriculture. China's Noble Agri, wholly owned by the influential COFCO (China National Cereals, Oils, and Foodstuffs Corporation), has two assets in Ukraine: in Mariupol (sunflower seed processing

complex with a daily crushing capacity of 1,500 metric tons and storage capacity of 180,000 metric tons) and in Mykolaiv (grain port terminal with the capacity of 2.5 million tons per year and storage capacity of 125,000 tons). In 2015, Ukraine overtook the US as China's number one corn supplier.¹⁶ Despite the Russian efforts to label Ukraine as a failed state, to limit economic potential of Ukraine, and to invigorate Russian allies to side with Moscow, China has mainly been following its own interests. Since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, the volume of agricultural trade between Ukraine and China has increased by 56%.¹⁷

Acquiring of the Ukrainian Bank for Reconstruction and Development by China's Bohai Commodity Exchange in 2017¹⁸ gives a signal about Chinese desire to engage further in Ukrainian economy.

Ukraine's participation in China International Import Expo (CIIE) 2018 on 05-08 November was one of the remarkable results of the year. The EBRD supported Ukraine's participation in CIIE 2018 within the framework of the EU's EU4Business initiative, which helps Ukrainian companies to enter new markets.

Also in June 2018, CNNC (China National Nuclear Corporation) signed a *Memorandum on Possibilities of International Cooperation*

13 Z. Liu, *The Analysis of the Relationship between China and Ukraine*, China-CEEC Think Tanks' Network, 11 January 2018 [http://16plus1-thinktank.com/1/20160111/1095.html access: 16 June 2018].

14 S. Gerasymchuk, *Сніжний дракон у полярних льодах – Арктична політика КНР (Snow Dragon in Polar Ice – the Arctic Policy of PRC)*, "Ukrayinsky Interes", 29 January 2018 [https://uain.press/articles/snijnyj-dragon-u-polyarnyh-lodah-arktychna-polityka-knr-682723 access: 14 February 2019].

15 *Ukraine, China Renew Cooperation in Space Sphere until 2020*, "112 International", 28 November 2017 [https://112.international/ukraine-top-news/ukraine-china-renew-cooperation-in-space-sphere-until-2020-23109.html access: 12 February 2019].

16 O. Mykal, *Why China Is Interested in Ukraine*, "The Diplomat", 10 March 2016 [https://thediplomat.com/2016/03/why-china-is-interested-in-ukraine/ access: 16 February 2019].

17 O. Oleinikova, *Will Chinese Investment Sacrifice Ukraine's Dreams of Democracy to Economic Needs?*, "The Conversation", 11 August 2016 [https://theconversation.com/will-chinese-investment-sacrifice-ukraines-dreams-of-democracy-to-economic-needs-61151 access: 05 March 2019].

18 J. Brooke, *With Russia on the Sidelines, China Moves Aggressively into Ukraine*, "Atlantic Council", 05 January 2018 [http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/with-russia-on-the-sidelines-china-moves-aggressively-into-ukraine access: 12 February 2019].

with Enerhoatom on finishing the construction of the third and fourth blocks of Khmelnytskyi power plant. Before that, in December 2017, a *Memorandum of Understanding* was signed between the State Agency on Energy Efficiency of Ukraine and National Energy Administration of China for cooperation in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and alternative energy sources.

Another new trend (which is corresponding with the global trends in Chinese overseas economic activities) is the interest of Chinese companies in infrastructure projects in Ukraine. With respect to infrastructure, cooperation is expected between Ukravtodor and China Road and Bridge Corporation, which signed a memorandum on the construction of Odesa-Mykolaiv road. State-owned Ukravtodor also signed a contract with the Chinese Xinjiang Communications Construction Group Co., Ltd on overhaul of specific sections of Stryi – Ternopil – Kropyvnytskyi – Znamyanka road and works on sections of Kyiv – Kharkiv – Dovzhanskyi road. Also, among the successful infrastructure projects, it is worth mentioning the completion of works on Pivdennyi port dredging, conducted by China Harbour Engineering Company, which also embarked on dredging of Chornomorsk port. Arguably, these projects may indicate the interest of the Chinese economic actors in bidding for concession of the capacities of the mentioned ports.

Ambitious Plans for the Future

It is understandable that Ukraine-China relations are far below their potential. There are several ambitious plans and project, which are already on the agenda.

In 2017, China undertook another step for establishing closer relations with Ukraine, proposing to set up a mutual visa-free regime between the two countries. The respective negotiations have not started but will start immediately when the Ukrainian side will inform China about the readiness for the respective talks, according to the information from the Chinese Embassy to Ukraine.¹⁹ In April 2018, China unilaterally established a visa-free regime for Ukrainian tourists visiting resorts of Hainan province.²⁰



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The enthusiasm of the Chinese side is perceived in Ukraine with mixed feelings. On the one hand, within the Ukrainian strategy of building a coalition of allies able to support Kyiv in its fight with the Russian Federation, closer relations with Beijing can be perceived as an asset. However, at the same time, Kyiv has to consider that in political terms China usually prefers neutrality, whereas the relations with the EU and the US, who are the key allies of Ukraine providing economic and military assistance, remain to be of vital importance for the Ukrainian sovereignty. The emerging tensions between the US and the EU on the one hand and China on the other hand put Ukraine into an uncomfortable position when each step in the direction of closer relations with Beijing can be perceived with nervousness in Washington, Brussels, and Berlin.

19 *Ще один ніж у спину: Китай заговорив про безвізовий режим та зону вільної торгівлі з Україною (One More Stab in the Back: China Started Talking about Visa-free Regime and Free Trade Zone with Ukraine)*, "24 Kanal", 26 April 2017 [https://24tv.ua/shhe_odin_nizh_u_spinu_kitay_zagovoriv_pro_bezvizoviy_rezhim_ta_zonu_vilnoyi_torgivli_z_ukrayinoyu_n822281 access: 11 March 2018].

20 *У Китаї відмінили візи для українців (In China Visas for Ukrainians Abolished)*, "Ukrmedia", 19 April 2018 [https://ukr.media/world/354707/ access: 12 February 2019].

Under such circumstances, in political sphere, Ukraine should take active steps to intensify bilateral political dialogue, no matter who is going to become the new President of Ukraine. A meeting between the leaders of Ukraine and China as soon as in 2019 could become a trigger for the intensification of the relations. Besides, more attention should be paid by the Ukrainian authorities to the Ukraine-China projects that are currently underway. For instance, at the level of the President, it is worth taking under patronage the projects in the sphere of military and technical cooperation, space industry; and at the level of the Cabinet of Ministers, patronage should be provided to projects in the sphere of infrastructure and agricultural complex.

Within the “16+1” format, Ukraine should launch consultations regarding its participation in this format at least at the level of an observer and to conduct respective consultations with Belarus to learn from their experience of gaining such a status.

In addition, there is a need to have consultations with the EU regarding the potential role and place of Ukraine within the framework of the European strategy on

Euro-Asian Connectivity. Such a step would prove to both the Chinese and the European partners Ukraine’s desire to benefit from cooperation and to avoid any steps that may hurt the interests of the political and economic partners.

Finally, the government should be interested in enhancing dialogue between business elites, analytical centres, and experts’ communities of Ukraine, the EU, and China in order to elaborate commitment-oriented recommendations on the improvement of economic cooperation, finding reasonable compromises regarding sensitive political issues, and elaborating win-win strategies of implementing global and regional cooperation initiatives.

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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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UKRAINIAN POLICY TOWARDS CENTRAL ASIAN STATES: WHICH BRIDGES DO WE NEED?

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Central Asian states are often seen as a bridge between Europe and Asia. Given the importance of the region, Ukraine needs to reconsider deeply its policy towards the Central Asian states. The paper examines the specifics of governance in the Central Asian states, regional problems, interests of the Central Asian states and global actors in the dimensions of logistics, energy, and security. Suggestions for Ukraine's policy in Central Asia are presented through the article.

Introduction

In this paper, the term “Central Asia” will refer to five states: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Although regional integration is highly complicated, the image of a united Central Asia has a symbolic meaning, is reflected in the UN General Assembly resolutions, and may become more viable due to the restart of Uzbekistan's relations with neighbours after 2016.

Experts have found some degree of consensus in discussions on Ukraine's policy towards the states of Central Asia. Low level of cooperation is characterized by the lack of a strategic vision. Annual reports on the assessment of Ukraine's foreign policy presented by the Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism”¹ gave Ukraine's presence in Central Asia a poor rating. The first superficial look at the state of the art in

Ukraine's relations with the Central Asian states reveals Ukraine's recent diplomatic underrepresentation. Both political and economic cooperation is undermined by the fact that these landlocked states are close allies of the Russian Federation in a number of alliances and projects and have little space left for manoeuvre in light of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. One should not,



Low level of cooperation is characterized by the lack of a strategic vision

however, mistakenly remove that region from the agenda after Ukraine has officially chosen the pro-EU course, since being embedded in the patchwork of international relations, no state can allow itself a strictly black and white division.

1 H. Maksak et al. (ed.), *Ukrainian Prism: Foreign Policy 2017*, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Office in Ukraine: Kyiv 2018, p. 224.

Moreover, the current state of affairs challenges Ukraine in several dimensions. First, trade between Ukraine and the Central Asian states has recently become complicated due to restrictions imposed by the Russian Federation. Not to forget, law restrictions may result in the rise of informal mechanisms of cooperation or the rise of crime, such as corruption at border control. Secondly, the states of Central Asia usually move in the wake of Russian policy regarding Ukraine, for instance, while voting in the UN. Simultaneously, Kazakhstan emphasizes its readiness to take part in the UN peacekeeping mission to Ukraine in case of its deployment. It is not a case for Ukraine as Kazakhstan has strong ties in military cooperation with Russia and is a member of the pro-Russian Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), to which Russia devotes much attention despite permanent institutional problems. Finally, cooperation with global actors in the region may present both a challenge and an interest for Ukraine.

Five Shades of Authoritarianism: Leadership and Regional Issues in the Region

Divided by the Soviet rule, geographical peculiarities, water and climate-related disputes, religious and ethnic cleavages, the Central Asian states present five shades of electoral authoritarianism with different levels of regime consolidation and fragmentation of political parties². Interstate relations are based on personal relations with authoritarian leaders, who direct both foreign policy and political life, while facing almost no institutional restrictions.

In terms of electoral cycles, elections are not happening often and are not the

regular way of changing a head of state. Even if elections happen, the influence of the previous rulers remains strong, as it is expected in Kazakhstan, where, even in the case of a transfer of power, the incumbent Nazarbayev would keep his influence in the frame of the National Security Council of Kazakhstan³. The modest success of reforms provided by Uzbekistan's new president should not give much optimism as together with making Uzbekistan more open to the world, these reforms rely on a repressive system. We are yet to see whether they would lead the country to what is called "democracy by mistake" or, at least, make Uzbekistan more attractive for other partnerships. Whether Uzbekistan's openness would result in re-engagement with Russia is another question altogether. Kyrgyzstan somewhat differs as it has failed to consolidate its regime, so the state has very low political plurality. However, its foreign policy is undermined by a strong dependence on Russia. To sum up, diplomatic communications at the highest level present the main form of interstate communication with the states of Central Asia.

Besides holding on to power, Central Asian leaders have to deal with regional problems. It is in the interest of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan to finish the demarcation and delimitation of the state borders and provide mine-clearing operations where needed. Enclaves, ethnic heterogeneity, and concerns relating to the Russian language as an instrument of soft power in the region add more tension. The Aral Sea crisis affects negatively the environment of the region and has little chance to be managed due to the mostly declarative rhetoric and potentially challenging initiatives, such as

2 G. Golosov, *The Five Shades of Grey: Party Systems and Authoritarian Institutions in post-Soviet Central Asian States*, "Central Asian Survey", 2018, pp. 1-18.

3 A. Gussarova, *Kazakhstan Moves to Expand, Strengthen National Security Council*, "The James Town Foundation", 13 February 2018 [<https://jamestown.org/program/kazakhstan-moves-expand-strengthen-national-security-council/> access: 15 February 2019].

the extraction of hydrocarbons from the Uzbek side and the construction of artificial lakes in Turkmenistan.

Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province borders with Afghanistan and is practically beyond the central government's control. The extremist Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan found shelter in Tajikistan, and that creates more tension among the states. Threats from the Afghan side, including the spread of radical Islam, illegal arms and drug traffic, Taliban and ISIS activity make Central Asia dependent on external help and this complicates the development of infrastructure projects. However, security issues and concerns regarding Afghanistan can serve a cornerstone for further regional integration.

Support of Central Asian initiatives regarding the issues listed above at the international level may serve as an additional tool for cooperation, especially given that presidents of the states of the region strive to gain symbolic legitimacy at the domestic level by highlighting how successful they are in the global arena. Although solutions to most of the challenges require improvements in the quality of governance and local actions, the transnational character of the problems coincides with Ukraine's interests and values in terms of such global issues as terrorism or climate change. Given the fact that the regional identity of Central Asia as a geographical and political unit appears to be more prominent, e.g., while cooperating in the UN⁴, a partnership between Central Asia

and other states beyond the traditional global actors gets favourable conditions. However, this optimism may be followed by, but does not automatically imply, the diminishing influence of great powers, which are the main drivers of regional formats of cooperation.



trade between Ukraine and the Central Asian states has recently become complicated due to restrictions imposed by the Russian Federation

The Central Asian states have weak economies, exhausted by bad governance. Being landlocked creates their dependence on global actors, mainly Russia, in the transit of goods and energy. As logistics and energy projects are mostly developed with foreign sources, the Central Asian states have massive issues with debt. Kazakhstan's diversified debt structure⁵ does not pose a serious problem, but Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are in the risk zone due to the debt to China within the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)⁶. China's practice to "forgive" debts for resources not only undermines sovereignty, but may create further problems. Turkmenistan presents an excellent example: It experiences problems with cash and has to grant China gas for free in exchange for pipeline construction. Tajikistan is the most remittance-dependent country and is seriously affected by sanctions against Russia⁷. Kazakhstan aims

4 *Resolution Adopted by the UN General Assembly on 22 June 2018, A/RES/72/283, Strengthening Regional and International Cooperation to Ensure Peace, Stability and Sustainable Development in the Central Asian Region*, United Nations, 2018 [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/72/283 access: 11 March 2019].

5 *External Debt*, National Bank of Kazakhstan [<https://nationalbank.kz/?docid=202&switch=english> access: 15 February 2019].

6 J. Hurley et al., *Examining the Debt Implications of the Belt and Road Initiative from a Policy Perspective*, Center for Global Development Policy Paper 121, March 2018 [www.cgdev.org/publication/examining-debtimplications-belt-and-road-initiative-a-policy-perspective access: 15 February 2019].

7 U. Mukhtorova, *Central Asia and NATO against a Backdrop of Changing Geopolitical Realities*, NATO Defense College Fellowship Monograph, January 2018, [<http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=1132> access: 15 February 2019].

to stay as a regional leader and tries to develop its economy, implementing new projects and initiatives in innovations, green economy, renewable energy, financial sector. Cooperation with Kazakhstan on these issues may be a subject for further analysis.

The main narrative proposed by the region is to be a bridge between Europe and Asia. This aspiration coincides with perceptions of global actors, which seek to use the region as an instrument of further expansion. Being puzzled in terms of stakeholders, interests, and thematic directions, the question of the agenda regarding Central Asia and the image of a bridge can be better considered in three interconnected dimensions: logistics and infrastructure, energy, and security.



Russia aims to keep its leading role in the energy sector and cannot let any project out of its patronage

Further, I will try to explain the interests of Central Asian states and global actors in the respective areas and describe the projects that are on the agenda. India, Turkey, and Iran play their cards in the region. Their influence, as well as the role of respective regional organizations or smaller formats such as the US-led “C5+1”, which implies annual foreign ministers’ meetings of the Central Asian countries and the US, should not be underestimated as well. However, I focus on such global actors as China, Russia, the EU, and NATO. First, their presence in the region is determinative; secondly, Ukraine has these actors as significant others and,

due to the relatively weak capacity to play a big part by itself, should find its place in their competition or cooperation over the region.

At the Heart of Trade Roads

While the EU seems to be the only global actor concerned about democratic development in the region and is likely to keep this agenda in the future, it also considers Central Asia in terms of the Asia – Europe connectivity. In the latest Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM)⁸, emphasis was given to the road transport and rail connection in terms of the East – West link from the EU to China and Central Asia. The EU is certainly concerned by China’s rise and its Belt and Road Initiative. The Connectivity Strategy was even called an alternative to the BRI project. For the time being, the EU is preparing a new strategy towards Central Asia, with the previous one in place from 2007–2013. We are still waiting to see how much attention will be given to democratic values, and how seriously the EU takes cooperation with the region in infrastructure, energy, and security issues.

Sea connection between Europe and Asia is provided by Turkmen and Kazakh seaports at the Caspian. Project “Eurasia”, highly advocated by the Kazakh president Nazarbayev, should connect the Caspian Sea with the Black Sea through the territory of the Russian Federation and then via the Kerch Strait⁹. The project seems to be alive only in public speeches and attracts no serious interest of stakeholders, including Russia and, supposedly, China, so far. What is really probable and what is advocated at the EU level is a connection with the

8 *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank. Connecting Europe and Asia – Building Blocks for an EU Strategy*, 19 September 2018 [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/50708/connecting-europe-and-asia-building-blocks-eu-strategy_en access: 15 February 2019].

9 *Kazakhstan Wishes Access to the Sea*, “Tenge Monitor”, 03 August 2018 [<http://economics.kazgazeta.kz/?p=24389> access: 15 February 2019].

Black and the Mediterranean Sea via the Caspian Sea and the South Caucasus to the Romanian port of Constanta, which may become a transshipment point of goods from/to Turkmenistan. Both Constanta and Turkmenbashi are located on the Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) trade route and have importance in terms of China's BRI.

Ukraine, with its Odessa port and a joint border with Romania, should take a proactive position and become involved in the project. Maintaining good relations with Romania and Georgia is thus a priority for Ukraine in these projects.

Landlocked Uzbekistan aims at getting access to the Caspian Sea (via the Navoiy-Turkmenbashi rail link through Turkmenistan) and further to Europe as well as to the Persian Gulf via the Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Oman railway. Its interest in financing the expansion of the Mazar-i-Sharif-Herat line (currently operating up to Hairatan) in Afghanistan is due to further plans to get access up to China and India.

China is highly interested in improving connections with bordering Central Asian states, including the Angren-Pop railway tunnel and the project of a railway connection Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan-China. The Central Asian states see benefits from China's interest in the region in terms of the BRI, as it would help to develop infrastructure and diversify trade roads.

All That Energy

Russia aims to keep its leading role in the energy sector and cannot let any project out of its patronage. The most ambitious idea is to create a single gas market in the frame of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and to launch it within the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) before 2025. The expected creation of this market served as a formal reason for Kazakhstan to deny gas

export to Ukraine in 2015. It is unlikely that the market would start operating in time, and Russia tries to involve Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the EEU. In Uzbekistan, Russia is to build the first nuclear power plant in Central Asia. Ukraine has experience with nuclear energy, which can be shared with Uzbekistan, whose experts are already visiting Ukrainian nuclear stations.

Kazakhstan is still dependent on oil transit through Russian territory. In Kyrgyzstan, Russia was also involved in hydropower projects, but due to economic difficulties the project has been frozen and the dispute sent to the ICJ. Tajikistan denied Russian aspirations to take part in the construction of hydropower plants (HPPs) due to the unfavourable terms of the contract proposed by Russia and objections from the Uzbek side. Construction of HPPs will remain a factor of tension and further fuel conflicts between the states of the region. The case is that the construction of HPPs by Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in the upper reach of common rivers is negatively seen by downstream Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan as a cause of the lack of water for their agricultural needs.

For that reason, potential political escalations with the following outcomes for the interstate relations should be considered before planning the participation of Ukrainian companies in the building of HPPs. The challenge for Ukraine is to decide whether the unclear business interests or a partnership with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and the regional unity are of higher importance.

In terms of relations with Turkmenistan, Russia tries to win time with empty promises to keep the Central Asian state in its fairway. Turkmenistan is in a very unpleasant situation now as it has China as the only importer of its gas, which undermines Turkmenistan's energy security. Other traditional buyers of Turkmen gas, Russia and Iran, have long-term disputes with

Turkmenistan and are unlikely to restore gas imports in the nearest future. The fuel to the fire is added by the fact that Turkmenistan suffers from an economic crisis. Last summer, Russia promised to restore gas supply from Turkmenistan starting from 2019; however, no feasible results have been seen yet. It is doubtful that Russia has any economic interest in Turkmen gas and is ready to buy it just to prevent further growth of China's influence in the region in general and in Turkmenistan in particular.

Turkmen gas is unlikely to be considered seriously at the EU level. The TCP project (Trans-Caspian pipeline), which is to deliver gas from Turkmenistan through the Caspian Sea to Azerbaijan, is in the list of Projects of Common Interest of the EU. As a part of the Southern Gas Corridor, it would be accessible to several EU states and able to diversify import of Turkey and Bulgaria, which strive to be gas hubs. However, scheduled for June 2019, the project would unlikely be finished. Azerbaijan aims to deliver gas by itself and may hope for some leverage on Russia regarding Nagorno-Karabakh. Russia and Iran have no interest in the TCP despite some talks on including Iran in the project. The Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea, finally signed last summer after years of fruitless negotiations, only gave some frameworks for the demarcation of boundaries and construction of pipelines, so current disputes between Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Iran are yet to be resolved; business interests are not very clear¹⁰. However, one should not hurry to take the TCP off the agenda with regards to the continual interest showed by different states, mainly Georgia and Germany. Without further advocating for the TCP, Turkmenistan risks falling under Russian influence completely. In terms of the estimated costs, gas supply

through the Central Asia pipeline (runs from Turkmenistan to Russia) and via Ukraine's GTS to Europe seems to be most profitable for Turkmenistan. It is for further policy evaluation of how to reactivate this option with benefits for both Turkmenistan's and Ukraine's interests.

The TAPI project (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India), which will enable the supply of Turkmen gas to India, is of vital interest for Turkmenistan. One should take into account that, as Turkmenistan does not cope with the completion of its part of TAPI, Russian involvement in the project becomes more possible. Afghanistan may hope that Russia will boost the project. Ukraine should consider possible involvement of other parties in TAPI and CASA-1000 when cooperating on these issues.

It was already mentioned that the states of the region are in danger in terms of border security and spread of terrorism, namely regarding the situation in Afghanistan. Such vulnerability is also used by global actors in geopolitical games and creation of political narratives.

Cooperation and Competition in Security Issues

Security concerns of global actors in the region are concentrated around but not restricted to the Afghan issue. NATO has become a prominent security partner in Central Asia with regards to its presence in Afghanistan and the Partnership for Peace programme. Its activity has been limited in recent years and focused mostly on military training and education of the military. Kazakhstan has been the most active partner of NATO with the main focus on peacekeeping. Earlier open to cooperation,

10 S. Pirani, *Let's Not Exaggerate: Southern Gas Corridor Prospects to 2030*, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies Paper: NG 13, July 2018 [<https://www.oxfordenergy.org/publications/lets-not-exaggerate-southern-gas-corridor-prospects-2030/>; access: 15 February 2019].

Kyrgyzstan has entered “the new era of being a Russian client” after it closed the only NATO base in the region in Manas because of the Russian pressure¹¹. Neutral Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan cooperate with NATO in security issues and, when there was a need, they provided territories and air space for NATO transfer to or from Afghanistan¹². However, the Russian role is growing and opposing to NATO involvement.

Recently declared, the US withdrawal from Afghanistan is promised to be gradual and in coordination with NATO. Given the fact that a threat from the highly decentralized Taliban and ISIS remains, and Central Asia has no capacity to respond to all the challenges by itself, it is doubtful that the West would stop cooperating on the issue with the region. Whether it would trigger the rise of the activity of Russia or China, or a more prominent involvement of India, we are yet to see.

Russia has military bases in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, which are all members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and uses security concerns of terrorism, both real and imagined, presenting itself as “a security guarantee” and “the only reliable protector” to eliminate terrorist influence. Russian troops, in particular, helped in joint Afghan border control with Central Asian states. The latter, being the most passive NATO partner, has a Russian

military base with the Russian military managing its space station “Okno”. Besides, Russia supplies Central Asian states, mainly Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, with cheap but usually obsolete weapons¹³. However, the perspective for Ukraine or the EU countries to sell arms to, say, Turkmenistan should not be perceived optimistically due to the EU agreement to reject licenses to countries that are known for domestic repressions¹⁴.

China definitely “goes West”, strengthening its military presence together with the development of infrastructure projects in the region. With this strategy, China accumulates political influence towards global leadership, facing no serious opposition from Russia, which can only maintain the rhetoric of the coincidence of interests and good partnership. China uses both bi- and multilateral mechanisms to catalyse military cooperation, e.g., the Quadrilateral Cooperation Coordination Mechanism among China, Tajikistan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, which should operate under the Shanghai Cooperation. China also has started to strengthen its military presence in terms of border control due to the allegedly growing threat from the Afghan side¹⁵. Anti-Chinese sentiments in the region may slow down China’s expansion, but not pose a serious opposition. We are to see whether there would be a new balance of China and Russia in the region, and what place would be left for the West.

11 S. Ott, *Russia Tightens Control over Kyrgyzstan*, “The Guardian”, 18 September 2014 [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/18/russia-tightens-control-over-kyrgyzstan> access: 15 February 2019].

12 U. Mukhtorova, *Central Asia and NATO against a Backdrop of Changing Geopolitical Realities*, NATO Defense College Fellowship Monograph, January 2018 [<http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=1132> access: 15 February 2019].

13 U. Mukhtorova, *Central Asia and NATO against a Backdrop of Changing Geopolitical Realities*, NATO Defense College Fellowship Monograph, January 2018 [<http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=1132> access: 15 February 2019].

14 *Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP*, “Europa.eu”, 08 December 2008 [<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32008E0944&from=EN> access: 15 February 2019].

15 G. Shih, *In Central Asia’s Forbidding High Lands, a Quiet Newcomer: Chinese Troops*, “Washington Post”, 18 February 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/in-central-asias-forbidding-highlands-a-quiet-newcomer-chinese-troops/2019/02/18/78d4a8d0-1e62-11e9-a759-2b8541bbbe20_story.html access: 19 February 2019].

Conclusions

Central Asia is keeping its geopolitical significance as an energy and trade bridge between Europe and Asia, and global actors would like to have more control over that bridge. The complexity of relations with the region is also due to the unreliability of its states and changing conditions in the carrying out of joint projects, weakness of their economies, with dependence on external forces and debt spiral, and political regimes.

Under such conditions of increasing competitiveness, and given the physical distance, it is a challenge for Ukraine to participate in this geopolitical game. There is good news: The most suitable policy for Ukraine is to cooperate with global actors in bridging Central Asia. A clear understanding of the configuration of political forces may equip Ukraine with the necessary strategic view on how to reach foreign policy goals with limited resources.

Joint projects with the EU and the South Caucasus states, in particular, in terms of the increase of transport capacity to connect Central Asia and Europe, as well as China's initiatives in the frame of the BRI must be taken into account. It is clear that Georgia and Romania should be given more attention. In

terms of security, the partnership with NATO in the region continues to be a priority, with the focus on cooperation regarding the Afghan issue, despite all the current uncertainty. One must also not forget about the less visible but certainly important issues that are not covered in this paper but need additional attention: hybrid threats, including cyber security, alleged protection of minorities' rights, rethinking of the Soviet past, and others. These common challenges may present a subject for interagency cooperation, and cultural diplomacy may be helpful as well.

It is a tough and crucial task for Ukraine to maintain permanently good political relations with the Central Asian states and provide active diplomatic work on the ground, as well as to be ready to cooperate more actively if the foreign policy environment becomes more favourable.

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FOREIGN POLICY IN SOUTH CAUCASUS: IS UKRAINE IN THE GAME?

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The role of the South Caucasus in Ukrainian foreign policy is growing. The new regional and global positioning of Azerbaijan and Georgia, as well as a new political reality in Ukraine countering the Russian aggression, have encouraged Baku, Tbilisi, and Kyiv towards mutual rapprochement in recent years. Another reason for the South Caucasus to become one of the priority dimensions for Ukrainian foreign policy is Ukraine's interest in new international markets and its inclusion in the system of global trade routes. The aim of this article is to give a complex assessment of the current foreign policy agenda of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia for a more effective elaboration of the Ukrainian foreign policy in the region.

The South Caucasus region can be taken as a test for efficiency of the Ukrainian foreign policy strategy. Friendliness towards Ukraine of Georgia and Azerbaijan, restrained Armenia, connections with Central Asian states – all these conditions could have been used by Ukrainian diplomacy. However, strategic cooperation has often been confined to political declarations.

The South Caucasus still stands as a promising and important direction for Ukrainian foreign policy considering the Ukrainian needs of new markets and incorporation in a system of international trade routes. The results of the Russian aggression against Ukraine include, inter alia, the loss of a substantial part of trade transit connections that are passing through Russia. In these conditions, the South Caucasus trade route has become more attractive for global actors. During the last 4-5 years, Georgia and Azerbaijan have managed to initiate and

implement a number of projects, which in the nearest future (around 2020-2022) will transform the region into a hub of trade and energy transit along the South-West and the North-South international routes.

Economic Cooperation as a Factor of Regional Connectivity and Political Influence

The states of the South Caucasus region consider their inclusion in global trade routes not only as an incentive for economic development but also as a factor in strengthening their own security. Through the development of large-scale projects, Georgia and Azerbaijan have created a system of strategic partnerships and interdependence with neighbouring countries (Turkey, Russia, and Iran) and are generating more interest in the stability of the region on the part of global actors – the USA, China, and the EU.

The transit routes of the South-West and the North-South transport corridors, which connect Europe and Asia, pass through the South Caucasus. The active policy of Georgia and Azerbaijan in infrastructure development encourages the international community to consider the territories of these countries as part of a large land route – a more rapid supplement to the maritime trade route through the Suez Canal. Turkey, Russia, and especially Iran are also very interested in the development of transit routes through the South Caucasus. Azerbaijan is a key transit country in the South Caucasus region, whose good relations with Russia, Iran, Turkey, and Georgia allowed it to become a logistics and communication centre for cooperation in the South Caucasus. For Iran, despite its common border with Turkey, Azerbaijan is today an especially promising transit route, which may contribute to the development of Iran's transit potential.



The South Caucasus region can be taken as a test for efficiency of the Ukrainian foreign policy strategy

Rail transport has the main role in this sphere. The Baku–Tbilisi–Kars (BTK; Azerbaijan–Georgia–Turkey) railway is a promising route as part of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR) in the South-West corridor. Development of the transit potential is being considered by the countries of the region as the instrument of attraction of investments and stimulation of economic growth. Thus Georgia has been implementing three large-scale internal projects within its South-West route – the deep-water port in Anaklia, rail transport (part of the BTK railway), and the East-West motorway. In order to coordinate transit policy, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Kazakhstan

established the International Trans-Caspian Transport Consortium in 2016. Ukraine and Moldova joined the Coordination Committee of the Consortium as well.

Within the North-South corridor, Astarasht–Qazvin (Azerbaijan–Iran) railway is a promising route. It will connect transport routes among Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia. The communication between Iran and Azerbaijan has been in operation since April 2018. Iran has serious intentions to become the main transit route between the Indian Ocean and Europe. Thus, in March 2018, Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Iran signed an agreement on the establishment of a transport corridor between the Indian Ocean and Europe. Tehran's main stated objective is to redirect, at least partially, transportation flows from the Persian Gulf to the land route through Iran.

Armenia finds itself isolated from the implementation of international infrastructure projects in the region. This is mostly due to the intentional policy of Azerbaijan, which insists in its relations with its partners in the region (especially with Turkey) that they should only allow the involvement of Armenia in any projects on condition that Armenia yields in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Armenia's isolation is further deepened by Russia's de facto monopoly in the energy and transport sectors of Armenia and by a lack of interest on Russia's part in the development of alternative projects and the diversification of Yerevan's opportunities.

The Russian-Georgian conflict is another factor in Armenia's isolation. The railway connection between Georgia and Russia through the occupied territory of Abkhazia was cut off, and Tbilisi refuses to resume it. This not only deprives Yerevan of a direct connection to Russia but also significantly weakens the prospects for the development of Armenia's rail connections to Iran.

Since 2008, the Armenian railway is in a 30-year concession to the Russian South Caucasus railway. Today, Armenia possesses only one rail connection to Georgia. Armenia is very interested in two projects that could break this isolation: resumption of a direct connection to Russia through Georgia and Abkhazia, and the construction of the Yerevan–Tabriz (Armenia–Iran) railway as part of the Southern Armenian railway. However, both projects have uncertain prospects. Georgia blocks the first project despite pressure from Russia. The second project receives political support from Iran and Russia, and Moscow has even declared its readiness to partly finance the construction of the railway. Nevertheless, the lack of progress in the implementation of the Yerevan–Tabriz railway since 2008 (when the agreement between Armenia and Iran was signed) indicates that this route is now of minor interest for Iran and Russia. Moreover, there is an alternative route through Azerbaijan, which is already in operation. It is likely that in case of a change in Georgia’s attitude and the resumption of a direct rail connection between Armenia and Russia, the prospects of the Yerevan–Tabriz project will be substantially improved.

The South Caucasus is also important because of its energy projects. Azerbaijan, which not only is an exporter of fossil fuels but also seeks to strengthen its role as a transit country for energy resources, plays a very important role. Azerbaijan’s economy heavily depends on oil exports, which provides the bulk of Azerbaijan’s export revenues. Given the tendency of the reduction of oil reserves in explored

deposits, Baku is actively developing natural gas production.

Energy transit routes in the South Caucasus pass through the territories of Azerbaijan and Georgia, as do transport routes.¹ Given the decline in its own oil production, Azerbaijan is interested in establishing energy exports from Central Asian states to Turkey and to Europe through its own pipelines. However, Azerbaijani gas, even at its maximum explored production, does not provide sufficient quantity to fill the maximum capacities of the Southern Gas Corridor (in the long run – 32 billion m³). Accordingly, the EU is politically interested in actively promoting the connection of the Central Asian states (first of all – Turkmenistan) to the Southern Gas Corridor. To achieve this, the construction of the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline (from Turkmenistan to Azerbaijan under the Caspian Sea) is needed. It is clear that Russia is the main opponent to the project, and that Iran expresses some reservations. However, at the fourth meeting of the Southern Gas Corridor advisory council, it was stated that Turkmen and Iranian gas could be transported through the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline to Europe²; that is why Iran’s position may possibly change.

The signing on 12 August 2018 of the *Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea* and German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s visit to the South Caucasus, during which she negotiated with the leaders of Georgia and Azerbaijan, inter alia, on energy issues³, strengthened confidence that the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline will become a reality. An indication of the EU’s steady interest

- 1 Export routes for oil: Baku–Novorossiysk (since 1996), Baku–Supsa (since 1999), and the main one – Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC; since 2006). The Southern Gas Corridor, through which Central Asian gas will be supplied to Europe, now consists of three branches – the South Caucasus Pipeline (the Baku–Tbilisi–Erzurum Pipeline), TANAP (Trans-Anatolian Pipeline), and the future TAP (Trans Adriatic Pipeline).
- 2 *Sefcovic: EU Ready to Mull Possibility of Connecting Iran to SGC*, “AZNews.az”, 16 February 2018 [https://www.azernews.az/oil_and_gas/127308.html access: 28 August 2018].
- 3 G. Chazan, *Merkel Backs Efforts to Find Alternatives to Russian Gas*, “Financial Times”, 21 August 2018 [<https://www.ft.com/content/f1e8c7c2-a524-11e8-8ecf-a7ae1beff35b> access: 28 August 2018].

and persistence is that the latest agreement between the European Commission and Georgia on joint financing of commercial engineering of the project was signed in June 2018.

Armenia remains outside of the above-mentioned energy projects. In the energy realm, Yerevan's only partners are Russia and Iran. Armenia cooperates with Iran in offsetting mode – it supplies electricity to Iran, which is produced from gas supplied from Iran to Armenia. However, even such a mutual interest is not productive until the respective decision is made in Moscow.

Challenges and Obstacles for the Regional Cooperation

Despite big infrastructural projects and their growing role in global trade, the countries of the South Caucasus do not enjoy the full potential of regional cooperation due to the old challenges. The conflicts and territorial disputes in the region are of major importance for the foreign policy agenda in the South Caucasus.



In the South Caucasus, two security alliances are clearly visible – Russian-Armenian and Azerbaijani-Turkish

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia has a decisive influence on the region. The conflict is especially harmful and damaging for Armenia. It weakens Armenian positions in numerous dimensions: In internal politics, it is a sensitive issue for the society and a possible trigger for political crises; in foreign policy, it results in the political and economic isolation of Armenia in the region; its indirect consequence with regard to economics is the Russian control over the Armenian economy.

Azerbaijan is also not happy with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Unlike Yerevan though, Baku possesses enough resources, internal stability and resilience (due to strong authoritarian institutions), and external support (due to its alliance with Turkey). All these factors enable Azerbaijan to pursue a quite assertive conflict resolution policy (not excluding use of force) and to develop close cooperation with Russia with two aims: 1) to influence Moscow's policy on the status of Nagorno-Karabakh; 2) to decrease Russia's interest in regional projects that may strengthen the Armenian position in the region.

Possibilities for change in the status quo of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and opportunities for its resolution can appear if there are shifts in the balance of power in the region. That would contain a high risk of war escalation.

Another conflict in the South Caucasus region – the Russia-Georgia one – cannot be resolved by military means. Hence, Georgia insists on a peaceful resolution based on the principles of international law with the active involvement of the international community.

Russia can hardly influence Georgian foreign and security policy through the occupied territories, unless Russia chooses the means of provocation aimed at another full-fledged military escalation. That would put the security of the whole region in danger. Therefore, Georgia considers the possibility of such an escalation as the main threat for its national and for regional security.

Tbilisi tries to use all possibilities for deepening its cooperation with the EU and NATO and considers integration into these structures as a prime strategic goal and a way to the restoration of Georgian territorial integrity.

In the South Caucasus, two security alliances are clearly visible – Russian-Armenian and Azerbaijani-Turkish. Now Georgia

is actively working to join the latter. In 2010, Azerbaijan and Turkey signed the *Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Support*, which provides, inter alia, mutual assistance in the event of aggression by third countries⁴. Azerbaijan's proactive regional policy and its successful cooperation with Georgia and Turkey in infrastructure projects contributed to the development of the tripartite alliance among Baku, Tbilisi, and Ankara in 2014, based on Azerbaijani-Turkish security cooperation. The tripartite security cooperation today is developing based on the common economic interests of protecting transport and energy infrastructure. For now, the trilateral security alliance of Georgia, Turkey, and Azerbaijan is developing in the form of political ministerial consultations and annual joint military exercises.

The Russian-Armenian military and economic alliance is arranged in the form of bilateral agreements and multilateral security and economic projects. Armenia is a military ally of Russia and a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The Armenian air defence is a part of the Joint CIS Air Defence System. The Russian 102nd Military Base is deployed on the territory of Armenia (in Gyumri). Russian border guards together with Armenian guards keep watch over the Armenian borders with Turkey and Iran. Since 2016, the Armed Forces of Armenia and the Russian 102nd Military Base are part of the Joint Group of Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Armenia. At the same time, Yerevan does not have enough confidence in the guarantees of military solidarity on the part of its CSTO allies, which is enshrined in the National

Security Strategy of Armenia. In addition, Armenia expresses constant concerns about the supply of weapons and spare parts from Russia and Belarus to Azerbaijan.

While significantly restricted in foreign policy activities, Yerevan is looking for additional opportunities to manoeuvre around Russian policy and it uses all the available instruments, including the influential Armenian diaspora. Iran is a valuable partner for Armenia regarding Armenia's partial regional blockade. Therefore, Yerevan considers the sanctions regime against Iran as a foreign policy threat to Armenia. As Armenia has signed the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with the EU in 2017, its role as a mediator between Iran and the EU regarding the sanctions question may be an incentive for Armenian-Iranian cooperation. According to the recent expert assessment⁵ of Armenia's foreign policy's "window of opportunities", cooperation with the Middle Eastern countries, the countries of the Persian Gulf, and Egypt is considered a promising direction, which would not contradict Armenia's pro-Russian orientation.

Despite the resonance evoked by the recent domestic political changes in Armenia and actions of the government of Nikol Pashinyan, it would be hasty and mistaken to consider them as signs of a change in the foreign policy course of Armenia in the mid-term. Today's pro-government forces in Yerevan need Moscow's neutrality and the inviolability of Russian security guarantees at minimum, if not also Moscow's active support. Therefore, in the near future, we should not expect any major changes in Armenia's foreign policy.

4 *Azərbaycan Respublikası və Türkiyə Respublikası arasında strateji tərəfdaşlıq və qarşılıqlı yardım haqqında (Treaty on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Assistance between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Turkey)*, "e-Qanun.az", 21 December 2010 [<http://www.e-qanun.az/framework/21158> access: 13 July 2018].

5 S. Melkonyan, *Новая Армения: новая внешняя политика на Ближнем Востоке (New Armenia: New Foreign Policy in the Middle East)*, "Mediamax.am", 10 May 2018 [<https://mediamax.am/ru/column/12847/> access: 10 August 2018].

While relations between Georgia and Russia remain in the current state of cold hostility, and Russia's relations with Armenia are based on a full dependency, the relations between Russia and Azerbaijan present an example of skilful manoeuvring, cooperation, and interdependence. Baku manages to maintain active cooperation with Russia in the strategically important areas of defence, energy, and infrastructure, while simultaneously avoiding involvement in Russian-controlled organizations – the CSTO and the Eurasian Union. However, mentions of the possibility of Azerbaijan joining the CSTO or at least becoming an observer have become more frequent in both Russian and Azerbaijani media. Obviously, gaining political control over Baku has always been a priority and this goal has transformed into the main aim of Russian foreign policy in the South Caucasus for now. Control over Baku would enable Moscow to control the critical trade and energy routes that pass through Azerbaijan, which are a matter of interest in Asian countries as well as in Turkey and the EU.



Ukraine's activity is focused mainly on the relations with Georgia and has modest impact on the relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan

Therefore, Moscow uses all available means of “soft power” toward Azerbaijan, aimed at both the present and long-term prospects. The main Russian tools to influence Azerbaijani authorities are: 1) the Russian role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; 2) blackmail, considering the presence of the Azerbaijani diaspora in Russia; 3) the possibility of Russia imposing restrictions the importation of Azerbaijani agricultural products and/or on Russian exports of weapons to Azerbaijan.

Ukrainian Perspective

Although the South Caucasus is becoming more important for the world politics and attracts more attention of global players, it still stays quite a comfortable direction for Ukrainian foreign policy activity. Nevertheless, Ukraine's activity is focused mainly on the relations with Georgia and has modest impact on the relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan. This is partly due to Kyiv's passive position but mainly due to the settled strategic partnerships of Azerbaijan and Armenia with third powers. Thus, Ukraine's policy towards the South Caucasus shows less initiative and is avoiding thorny issues of regional political processes.

The Ukrainian South Caucasus foreign policy is mostly active in the sphere of supporting each other in the international tracks where there is full coincidence of interests. Today it is demonstrated with high-level Ukraine-Georgia relations, which is based on having a common enemy and common aspirations of European and Euro-Atlantic integration. Georgia considers Ukraine as an indispensable security partner. The practical results of the security partnership between the two countries are mutual political and diplomatic support in European and international institutions and organizations, synchronization of positions on the most sensitive issues, security cooperation within the frames of NATO, and interparliamentary cooperation.

Azerbaijan's and Georgia's interest in Ukraine is conceptually similar – both states want to have Ukraine as a strong ally that would be able to promote their European policy. Both countries are interested in strengthening the regional role of Ukraine to balance Russia's role and influence in the Black Sea region. Therefore, the interest and activity of Azerbaijan and Georgia with regard to Ukraine depends on the weight of Ukraine as a regional actor and on the

success of its foreign policy in the European and global dimensions.

Both Azerbaijan and Georgia point out the significance of the development of GUAM, as it unites the efforts and views of participating states on resolving territorial conflicts and in the fight against “aggressive separatism”⁶. For Baku and Tbilisi, GUAM has some significance also from the point of view of the development of transport and energy corridors and as a space for democratic and economic development.

Azerbaijan and Georgia support Ukraine in light of the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the Russian occupation of Ukrainian territories. At the same time, the policies of Baku and Tbilisi differ: While Georgia firmly supports Ukraine against Russian aggression in the international arena, Azerbaijan seeks to maintain a well-balanced approach and to avoid irritating Russia. Having had a part of its territory occupied, which is a similar problem to that of Ukraine, Azerbaijan adopted the policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of states and adheres to inter-state relations that deny external interference as its key foreign policy principle. That is why, on the one hand, Baku supports resolutions on the territorial integrity of Ukraine (e.g. the UN GA Resolution in March 2014), and, on the other hand, Azerbaijan’s interest in closer cooperation with Moscow corresponds to the logic of voting in favour of pro-Russian positions in the OSCE and PACE (e.g. voting in PACE for the return of the Russian delegation in January 2015).

Georgia and Azerbaijan are interested in increasing the number of participants/users of the transport and energy infrastructure passing through their territory. Therefore,

they will fully support Ukraine’s interest in joining the One Belt One Road Initiative, expanding trade ties with Central Asia and the Asian region in general, and in stepping up energy cooperation among Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Central Asian energy exporters.

Ukraine as well declares its ambitions to be an important link in the global transit routes. Needless to say, such intentions should be supported by the relevant internal policy of transforming transit potential into something solid.



While Georgia firmly supports Ukraine against Russian aggression in the international arena, Azerbaijan seeks to maintain a well-balanced approach and to avoid irritating Russia

Since Azerbaijan and Georgia are constantly upgrading and developing their armed forces, military and technical cooperation with Ukraine is important for both states.

In addition, in cooperation with Azerbaijan, Ukraine should take into account the particularly close alliance of the latter with Turkey and the interest of Baku in Ankara’s participation in all multilateral regional projects.

For Armenia, Ukraine can be a potentially significant partner, but only if the political situation in the South Caucasus changes and Russia’s influence on Armenia is reduced, since the latter factor is crucial for the low level of relations that exists between Ukraine and Armenia today.

6 National Security Concept of the Republic of Azerbaijan, [<https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/154917/Azerbaijan2007.pdf> access: 09 July 2018].

Even in the current unfavourable situation in bilateral relations, Kyiv should support the preconditions for their future development. In particular, Armenia should be encouraged to participate more actively in the framework of multilateral initiatives of the European Union and to cooperate in humanitarian and cultural areas.

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UKRAINIAN PERSPECTIVES IN AFRICA

Liubov Abravitova

Embassy of Ukraine in the Republic of South Africa

With a land mass bigger than China, Europe, India, and the US together, African continent with its natural resources and human potential has become an emerging centre of world development, as well as a zone of clash of interests of all major geopolitical players. The European Union, the USA, China, India, Brazil, Turkey, the Gulf States, and many others have taken note of the potential in Africa's transformation, and have mostly decided to increase their engagement. Africa has not yet risen to the top of Ukrainian business and political leaders' agendas. It is time for Ukraine to understand that Africa is a significant part of its future. African countries will affect further global security and development challenges, as well as will open opportunities for Ukraine's economic growth and influence. This article considers preconditions and perspectives of Ukraine-African cooperation, as well as ways of establishing win-win and self-sufficient relations between them.

Real Africa Today

With a land mass bigger than China, Europe, India, and the US together, African continent with its natural resources and human potential has become an emerging centre of world development, as well as a zone of clash of interests of all major geopolitical players. Africa possesses about 30% of the world's natural resources, including 83% of world platinum production, 55-60% of world production of cobalt, manganese, 40% of gold, 46% of diamonds, and 43% of palladium. Moreover, it has 10% of the world's oil reserves and produces nearly 70% of the global diamond trade.

It is unique because it is young. According to UNICEF's *Generation 2030* report,¹ which

unveiled statistics regarding the changing African demographic, survival rates, and urban rise, by 2055, 40% of the world's children will live in Africa. The United Nations predicts that by 2050, the African population will rise to at least 2.4 billion and will continue to grow to 4.2 billion, four times its current size, in the next 100 years.

Africa is the fastest urbanizing continent in the world. Over the past 50 years, urban population has doubled from 19% to 39%². In recent years, Africa has shown an emergence of a middle class in cities, accompanied by poverty reduction. Between 2005 and 2008, for the first time, the absolute number of poor people also declined, and nine million Africans escaped poverty during those three years³.

1 *Generation 2030 Report*, UNICEF, November 2017

[https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Generation_2030_Africa_2.0.pdf].

2 *Human Development*, African Development Bank Group, 2018

[<https://www.afdb.org/en/knowledge/publications/tracking-africa's-progress-in-figures/human-development/>].

3 S. Devarajan, *Africa Is Rising - Is Poverty Falling?*, The World Bank, 01 March 2012

[<https://blogs.worldbank.org/african/africa-is-rising-is-poverty-falling>].

According to the World Bank, six out of 10 of the fastest growing economies in 2018 were in Africa – namely Ghana, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Djibouti, Senegal, and Tanzania⁴. It is expected that the growth rate on the African continent will reach 3.5% in 2019. Economic forecasts indicate that Africa will be a 29-trillion US dollars economy in 2050, larger than the 2012 combined GDP of the US and Eurozone⁵.

As the *Doing Business Score* by the World Bank Group confirms⁶, 20 countries in Africa are among the top 50 most-improved world economies in business regulatory efficiency. That makes it emerge as an attractive investment destination and an important market for goods and services. According to the *Harvard Business Review*⁷, Africa also has the potential to become “the world’s next great manufacturing centre.” China is expected to lose 85-100 million low-cost, labour-intensive manufacturing jobs by 2030 and Africa stands to capture many of them.



According to the World Bank, six out of 10 of the fastest growing economies in 2018 were in Africa

The continent has recorded a significant step forward in its efforts to deepen democracy. The past decade has witnessed a series of successful elections and peaceful transitions of power in African countries. African countries have also made a remarkable progress in the field of regional cooperation

and integration. The emerging of a pan-African integrated market – the African Continental Free Trade Area, which covers over one billion people with a common GDP over 3.3 trillion US dollars, is the most promising initiative of the continent.

The above-mentioned facts indicate the emergence of Africa as a new economic boost powerhouse. Having in mind that by 2030 within the global society one in five people will be African, global centres of power recognize the exceptional economic importance of the African continent, as they will largely depend on availability of Africa’s raw materials, energy resources, and human capital.

Africa’s Development Challenges

However, it is understandable that Africa is diverse with its 54 countries in total. Theirs economies are varied: from the oil exporters of Algeria, Angola, Libya, and Nigeria, to the already more diversified economies such as Egypt, Morocco, or South Africa. Besides, many countries within the continent are in transition from agricultural to manufacturing/service economies.

What is unique about Africa is that its challenges are directly related to its opportunities and to all factors of its fast rising.

Indeed, the persistently high number of people in poverty, lack of infrastructure, conflicts, and ongoing problems with democratic governance have made Africa the world’s largest provider of

- 4 World Bank Says Six of the Ten Fastest Growing Economies in 2018 Will Be in Africa, “The African Exponent”, 17 January 2018 [https://www.africanexponent.com/post/8825-ghana-will-be-fastest-growing-economy-in-the-world-in-2018].
- 5 Africa Will Be a 29 Trillion Dollar Economy by 2050 – RenCap, CNBC Africa, 12 May 2016 [https://www.cnbc.com/africa/videos/2016/05/12/africa-will-be-a-29-trillion-dollar-economy-by-2050-rencap/].
- 6 *Doing Business Score*, World Bank Group, [https://www.doingbusiness.org/en/rankings].
- 7 I. Yuan Sun, *The World’s Next Great Manufacturing Center*, “Harvard Business Review”, May–June 2017, [https://hbr.org/2017/05/the-worlds-next-great-manufacturing-center].

emigrants. The rapid growth of the urban population can become a challenge for the demographic structure in Africa overall. Gaining in population, that fast will have its implications for poverty and the disparity between rich and poor. Rapid growth of young population will challenge food and water security as well as education and health systems of African countries. If more Africans move out of poverty, they will require more infrastructure and development. The growing population of young people, if left without jobs, will create new ways for terrorists to exploit the next generation.

The deficit of efficient investments in energy, transport, and water infrastructure on the continent presents a significant barrier to economic growth and development. However, if addressed, it can be a booster not only for the countries of the region, but also for the potential investors.

With proper investments in young people and by developing the infrastructure, Africa will have the opportunity to create a youth dividend, which will accelerate economic growth. Yet, Africa cannot afford this today on its own. If foreign partners fail to help, Africa will face an unprecedented youth burden, exacerbating unemployment, social unrest, and dependency on government handouts.

That is why Africa has emerged as a cornerstone of the world's biggest economies' efforts to enhance global influence and to prevent African development from turning into chaos.

Key Actors in Africa

The European Union member states are Africa's main trading and investment partners. They are also the main Aid-for-Trade providers with up to €5 billion committed over recent years. The EU is supporting deeper regional integration to foster economic development. An additional €50 million⁸ is being mobilized as initial support to Africa's integration agenda adopted in 2018.

In 2017, the EU and its member states provided €23.9 billion in Official Development Assistance (ODA), which is more than all other countries combined, to Africa⁹. That assistance was delivered primarily through country-level programs, but also through complementary regional and global thematic programs. The EU is also a leading donor of humanitarian aid in Africa. It invests on average over €1 billion per year in integrating infrastructure and connectivity. Some 40,000 kilometres of roads have been constructed, rehabilitated, or maintained since 2014¹⁰.

The EU-AU cooperation framework is based on three major levels. Heads of states from both sides are holding summits every three years (the latest one – the 5th AU-EU Summit – took place in Abidjan in November 2017); the EU Commission and AU Commission meet every year, and Joint Foreign Affairs Ministers are meeting annually.

The United States is another important partner of the continent. In December

8 *Progress Report on the Implementation of the European Agenda on Migration*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council, 14 March 2018 [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/com_2018_250_f1_communication_from_commission_to_inst_en_v10_p1_969116.pdf].

9 *The European Union And African Union: Key Partners, African Union*, 21 January 2019 [https://africa-eu-partnership.org/sites/default/files/documents/factsheet_eu_au-21-1-2019.pdf].

10 *The European Union And African Union: Key Partners, African Union*, 21 January 2019 [https://africa-eu-partnership.org/sites/default/files/documents/factsheet_eu_au-21-1-2019.pdf].

2018, the United States unveiled its “New Strategy for Africa”¹¹, which rests on four pillars: advancing US economic interests in Africa; countering radical terrorism and violent conflict; extracting maximum benefit from US aid; and the US’s determination to counter the rapidly expanding economic and political influence of China and Russia in Africa.

Moreover, the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) allowed the US and African countries to accomplish numerous projects in trade and investment. The AGOA has been the cornerstone of the US trade policy in Africa for almost two decades now. Total non-oil goods trade has more than doubled from 13 billion US dollars a year to almost 30 billion US dollars a year. In fact, last year, the total US trade climbed to 38.5 billion US dollars, up from 33 billion US dollars in 2016¹².



despite its tremendous potential, Africa has not risen to the top of Ukrainian business and political leaders’ agendas

China’s commitments to the continent are stronger than ever, as evidenced by the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)¹³. In the frame of the FOCAC, China and African countries will develop the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative in Asia and northeast Africa, sign a number of bilateral

agreements. China is investing heavily across Africa, building highways, hotels, bridges, and dams, seeking to get long-term access to resources. Since 1999, China has increased its trade with Africa more than sevenfold – to 170 billion US dollars¹⁴.

Japan also continues to deepen its political, commercial, and development presence in Africa. In 2019, the 7th Tokyo International Conference on African Development will take place. Jointly with India and China, it plans to form the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor Initiative.

Even though **Turkey** is a relatively new actor on the continent, in recent years it has been deeply involved in infrastructure and investment projects. The African Union in 2008 declared Turkey as a strategic partner of the continent¹⁵. Today, in line with the significant increase in diplomatic presence, Turkey has opened commercial consulates in 26 African capitals. In addition, the Turkish Foreign Economic Relations Council established business councils with 19 Sub-Saharan African countries. Turkey has been providing a substantial number of scholarships to African students. Turkish Airlines has become the major international airline connecting the continent to the world, flying to 48 destinations in 31 countries.

Russia has an ambition to play a leading role in the development of Africa’s energy and infrastructure development – leveraging on the Soviet historic ties with Africa during the continent’s anticolonial and independence

11 *The Trump Administration’s New Africa Strategy*, The Heritage Foundation, 13 December 2018 [<https://www.heritage.org/event/webcast-only-the-trump-administrations-new-africa-strategy>].

12 *Remarks by Secretary Tillerson: U.S.-Africa Relations: A New Framework*, US Embassy in Egypt, 06 March 2018 [<https://eg.usembassy.gov/remarks-secretary-tillerson-u-s-africa-relations-new-framework/>].

13 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation [<https://www.focac.org/eng/>].

14 *Statistics on China-Africa Bilateral Trade in 2017*, Ministry of Commerce of People’s Republic of China, 26 January 2018 [<http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/statistic/lanmubb/AsiaAfrica/201803/20180302719613.shtml>].

15 *Turkey and the African Union*, Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-and-the-african-union.en.mfa>].

movements. The year 2018 was marked by emergence of the so-called Russian Africa strategy or “The return of Russia to Africa”¹⁶. Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov undertook a five-day tour to Africa in March 2018, including visits to Angola, Namibia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Ethiopia. In 2019, the first Russia-Africa summit was announced.

Therefore, many countries, including those not mentioned here, have taken note of both the potential and the challenges in Africa’s anticipated transformation, and have mostly decided to increase their engagement and to pursue stronger ties with African countries.

Ukraine’s Take on African Perspectives

Yet, despite its tremendous potential, Africa has not risen to the top of Ukrainian business and political leaders’ agendas. It is time now for Ukraine to understand that Africa is a significant part of its future. African countries will affect further global security and development challenges, as well as will open extensive opportunities for Ukraine’s economic growth and influence. Ukraine has to look ahead in order to develop cooperation with Africa, with the aim of establishing win-win and self-sufficient relations.

To understand the variety of processes on the continent in order to address better the opportunities in different segments of possible cooperation, expert assessment is highly required. The absence of analysis is a core Ukrainian mistake on Africa. Since gaining independence in 1991, Ukraine has been lacking an academic and scholar research on issues of Africa’s development. Few analytical centres can provide deep analysis of the developments and perspectives on the continent.

Ukrainian diplomacy, within its competence, is being measured by the small number of representations on the continent. As of 2019, Ukraine keeps 11 diplomatic representations in Africa. Only six of them are located in Sub-Saharan Africa and responsible for more than 46 countries. Specialists on African studies all over the world agree on such aspects of establishing strong ties with all countries of the region as peer-to-peer contacts, which flow from high-level visits between states and proper follow-up of the reached engagements and agreements. One can hardly find information regarding visits of Ukrainian top officials to countries of Sub-Saharan Africa for the last 25 years. Diplomatic dialogue with most of them does not exceed the protocol correspondence on the occasions of national days.



As of 2019, Ukraine keeps 11 diplomatic representations in Africa. Only six of them are located in Sub-Saharan Africa and responsible for more than 46 countries

At the same time, many countries are already actively engaging in the grassroots. 2018 has seen an unprecedented increase in the number of high-level visits to African countries. Among them are visits of Emmanuel Macron to 11 countries in Africa; the UK Prime Minister paid the first visit to Africa since 2013; Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made his first working tour to the Sahel; Russian Foreign Minister and President Putin had several visits to African countries as well.

Ukraine has just started to turn its face to the continent. High-level political engagement is the first step Ukraine has to undertake in

16 The Return of Russia to Africa, “New African”, 12 November 2018 [<https://newafricanmagazine.com/news-analysis/politics/the-return-of-russia-to-africa/>].

order to get its place in the future system of coordinates of the continent.

In May 2018, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Pavlo Klimkin paid an official visit to the Republic of Kenya. This was the first-ever visit by the head of the Ukrainian diplomatic service to this country in the history of bilateral relations. Implications of this visit are already essential for both countries.

Ukraine and most of the African states share the same steady commitment to peace, security, and rule of law, as well as the same approach as to how this endeavour should be best promoted. Strengthening political cooperation with the region would allow establishing platforms for the expansion of the spectrum of bilateral agreements and working mechanisms within them. Moreover, it would provide African support for Ukraine's position on key international issues within international forums. As an example, their support is essential within the UN, where African countries form an influential group of 28% of votes in the General Assembly.

On the other hand, as Africa becomes more involved in global initiatives, and as it moves towards greater continental integration through African Union reforms and the Continental Free Trade Agreement, the need increases to think harder and more creatively about what kind of cooperation should be established between Ukraine and regional/pan-African organizations. There must be a national strategy and an action plan on how we are going to promote our interests within the pan-continental approach.

Trade and economic cooperation with the continent opens numerous opportunities for small and medium business as well as for big companies. According to Ukrainian

statistics in 2017¹⁷, the trade turnover with Africa totalled 4.7 billion US dollars, of which Ukrainian exports accounted for more than 4 billion US dollars, and imports from Africa for more than 700 million US dollars. Africa brings Ukraine 9% of foreign exchange earnings from exports. Yet, almost 80% of Ukrainian exports to the continent go to the countries of North Africa. Obviously, the potential of trade with all 54 countries of Africa is far from being exhausted.

Africa is becoming a great market for Ukrainian exports. Today, the main articles of our exports to African countries are agricultural products – primarily cereals and oils. African countries receive 14% of all export of Ukrainian agriculture; the larger shares in it have Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco. Transport and energy engineering products; agricultural machinery for small and medium-sized farmers; medicines, mineral products, light industrial consumer goods – these are the articles of Ukrainian exports we have to continue to bring to the “African consumer”. Promising projects also include collaboration of Ukraine and African countries in the spheres of tourism and culture.

Africa still has vast, undeveloped natural resources. Private sector expertise in Ukraine can facilitate responsible development of those resources, helping bring more Africans out of poverty to share in the economic value of those resources. Such an approach will also allow Ukraine to enhance its role as the exporter of services: from direct infrastructure development to innovative technological solutions. This type of cooperation is especially promising.

Today few of the total African exports are delivered to their neighbouring countries on the continent. The potential for more economic prosperity through trade on

17 *Foreign Economic Activities*, State Statistics of Ukraine, 2017
[http://ukrstat.gov.ua/operativ/operativ2017/zd/ztt/ztt_u/ztt1217_u.xls].

the continent itself is quite evident. As African nations achieve greater regional integration through lowering tariff barriers and improving transport, energy, and infrastructure links, that will create more opportunities for Ukrainian businesses and trade.

African countries are traditional partners of Ukraine in the field of military-technical cooperation. Both Ukraine and Africa are interested in developing bilateral military and technical cooperation, as Ukraine can offer Africa most advanced weapons systems and supply various types of competitive equipment. Opening of service/maintenance centres for the old equipment and joint production of military equipment is also a promising area for military and technical cooperation.

To use properly the continent's potential, African countries require an educated workforce. This takes on even more urgency given Africa's expanding youth population. In this regard, educational, scientific, and technological cooperation of Ukraine with African countries tends to expand. According to the data of the Ukrainian State Centre for International Education, today 21,515 African students are studying in Ukrainian universities out of 75,605

foreigners representing 154 countries of the world. This number can grow dramatically if properly addressed and will bring its dividends in future.

There is no doubt that the coming years will see an even more intense international competition in Africa. In the conditions of global political, economic, and environmental changes, Ukraine needs urgently to address the "elephant in the room" through adopting an "Africa Strategy of Ukraine" and establishing real mechanisms of research and implementation of its interests on the Continent of the Future.

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SEARCHING FOR A UKRAINE-EU COOPERATIVE APPROACH WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF IMPLEMENTING POLICIES IN AFRICA

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In the fall of 2018, the European Union launched a new partnership initiative with African countries, called the Africa-Europe Alliance. It emerged as a reaction to the increasing role and weight of the African region in international relations and the intensifying struggle for its resources among global players. In this regard, the questions arise whether the developed initiative corresponds to realities of today and what objectives are being pursued. At the same time, against the backdrop of Ukraine leadership's resolute efforts on the way to gaining full EU membership, more attention needs to be paid to the issue of cooperation between Kyiv and Brussels in the search for a cooperative approach in relations with the countries of the African continent.

Introduction

The beginning of the 21st century was marked by a period of military and political stabilization on the African continent, which entered the stage of progressive economic development.

According to the most optimistic scenario and in case the "African Economic Revolution" succeeds, the GDP of the region's countries over the next four decades will reach the level of the US and EU GDP, in current prices, combined, by 2050. Africa has left behind the period of

over 200 years of decline, and in the near future, we can expect that in the pace of economic growth, the Africans will surpass the success of the "Asian tigers".¹

In view of this, the EU is paying more attention to the African continent in its foreign policy. The former Chairman of the African Union Commission and former Foreign Minister of Gabon, Jean Ping, in the context of Africa's growing importance for the EU, stated: "Business and political circles of the Old World are beginning to look at Africa as a long-term political ally and potential business partner."²

- 1 C. Robertson, Y. Mhango, M. Moran, and others, *Why Africa Will Rule the 21st Century*, "African Business Magazine", 07 January 2013 [<https://africanbusinessmagazine.com/uncategorised/why-africa-will-rule-the-21st-century/>].
- 2 J. Ping, *Mondialisation, paix, démocratie et développement en Afrique: l'expérience du Gabon (preface Hubert Védrine)* [*Globalization, Peace, Democracy and Development in Africa: The Experience of Gabon (preface Hubert Védrine)*], L'Harmattan, 2002.

The current architecture of relations between the EU and Africa was established back in 2000, when the most comprehensive document, the *Cotonou Agreement*, was signed by 48 African states. The main objectives of cooperation are poverty reduction, integration of the participating countries into the world economy, and sustainable development. The most important innovations of the agreement compared with the previous partnership deals were the expansion of cooperation in the political sphere and the principle of reciprocity of obligations. Assistance on the part of the EU is conditioned by certain political requirements for partner countries on peacekeeping, respect for human rights, good governance, etc. The agreement expires in January of 2020, so in May of 2018, negotiations over a new document started. It is tentatively expected to cover six priority areas: democracy and human rights, economic growth and investment, climate change, poverty reduction, peace and security, as well as migration and mobility.

In the framework of the *Cotonou Agreement*, in 2007, a *Joint Africa-EU Strategy* was developed. This document has been agreed by the EU, the African Union, and individual African countries. Periodic action plans, including the EU-Africa Road Map for 2014-2017, are being developed. In 2017, updating the system of relations within the framework of the Africa-EU partnership was launched. The *Abidjan Joint Declaration of the Fifth EU-Africa Forum* envisaged joint actions in four areas: economic opportunities for youth, peace and security, mobility and migration, and cooperation on governance.

The complexity of relations between the EU and African countries is also due to the three Regional Strategies for Addressing Security

Issues in the African Ridge, the Guinean Gulf, and the Sahel.

However, in the fall of 2018, a new EU-Africa strategy was declared, known as the Africa-Europe Alliance, which is set to become very ambitious in terms of its objectives.

The Africa-Europe Alliance: Overview of Relations Strategy

In his statement on the EU's position at the plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 12 September 2018, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said: "To speak of the future, one must speak of Africa – Europe's twin continent. Africa is the future: By 2050, Africa's population will number 2.5 billion. One in four people on earth will be African. We need to invest more in our relationship with the nations of this great and noble continent. And we have to stop seeing this relationship through the sole prism of development aid. Such an approach is beyond inadequate, humiliatingly so."³



the EU is paying more attention to the African continent in its foreign policy

At the highest level, the EU recognizes that Africa no longer needs charity but rather a balanced partnership that is fair and genuine, and that the EU needs such kind of partnership as well. Juncker calls the new format of relations between the parties a new "Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs between Europe and Africa", covering creation of new jobs, long-term investment, and an updated agreement on free trade.

3 *State of the Union 2018: The Hour of European Sovereignty*, Authorised version of the State of the Union Address 2018, "Europa.eu", p. 8 [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/soteu2018-speech_en_0.pdf].

However, relations between the EU and Africa cannot be symmetrical at present, because the two regions are at different stages of development. The degree of integration of African countries within the African Union is lower than the interdependence of the EU member states, and politically, a significant number of regimes in African countries are far from European standards of democratic governance. Equally, the level of technological development of the two regions differs just as much, and this could be compared with the asymmetric partnership of the countries of North and Latin America within the framework of the Organization of American States, which was founded in 1948.

It is possible to identify a wide range of issues of mutual interest. First, the EU and Africa are moving closer together to keep alive the mechanisms for maintaining multilateralism in international relations. In particular, they are interested in the effectiveness of the United Nations and other international governmental organizations. Secondly, there is a growing global competition for Africa ("New Scramble for Africa"). China, Russia, India, the Gulf States, and Turkey continue to expand their presence on the continent, and this competition may cease to be peaceful, as exemplified by the military struggle of various non-African forces through their proxies for areas of influence in Libya after the fall of the regime of Gaddafi in 2011. Therefore, it brings Africa and the EU closer together in pursuit of common interests, such as combating global warming, promoting sustainable development, and ensuring security. Thirdly, contribution of the EU countries to the

strengthening of regional and sub-regional international organizations in Africa, which increases the weight of the continent in international relations, is indisputable. The European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, compared these partnerships to the relationship between "brothers and sisters"⁴.

At the same time, the most controversial topic in European-African relations now is the issue of migration. On the eve of the May elections to the European Parliament, a program of consistent migration control policy may be put forward, as only 10% of citizens of the ten EU member states covered by the Pew Research Global Survey are inclined to allow their governments to increase quotas for new migrants⁵.

Consequently, this is a concern for African governments, for which the migration problem has become a threat to the friendly relations with the EU. In particular, in terms of continued implementation of provisions of the Action Plan approved in 2015 at the EU-Africa Summit in Valletta, \$1.9 billion was allocated for African governments under the Emergency Fund for elimination of poverty and consequences of conflict with a view to repatriating African migrants. Yet even back then, the Africans urged the Europeans to develop more fundamental tools for solving the migration problem, as Africa needs programs to create new jobs that will be proportional to the pace of rapid population growth in the region. However, there are still doubts whether it will fully constrain migration⁶.

4 *Speech by High Representative / Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the panel "Towards a renewed Africa-EU partnership" of the S&D Group Africa Week 2017 Bruxelles, "Europa.eu", 27 September 2017* [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/33156/speech-high-representative-vice-president-federica-mogherini-panel-towards-renewed-africa-en_en].

5 P. Connor, J.M. Krogstad, *Many Worldwide Oppose More Migration – Both into and out of Their Countries*, Pew Research Center, 10 December 2018 [<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/12/10/many-worldwide-oppose-more-migration-both-into-and-out-of-their-countries/#more-309372>].

6 E. Bassot, *Ten Issues to Watch in 2019*, European Parliamentary Research Service, January 2019, pp. 8-9 [[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2019/630352/EPRS_IDA\(2019\)630352_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2019/630352/EPRS_IDA(2019)630352_EN.pdf)].

Juncker's September initiative to create an Africa-Europe Alliance is a response to the growing demand from the African partners. At the same time, they deepen the agreement reached at the 5th EU-Africa Summit, held in November 2017 in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire). Four goals of the Africa-Europe Alliance are articulated⁷: 1) stimulating strategic investments and strengthening the role of the private sector in creating new jobs; 2) investing in people through investing in education and advanced training; 3) improving the business environment and the investment climate; and 4) using the full potential of economic integration and trade.

At the same time, 36% of African trade is currently focused on the EU markets, while the volume of foreign direct investment from the EU to Africa is 40% of the total amount of foreign funding raised.

The new alliance between the two continents will create up to ten million jobs in Africa in the next five years; 30 million Africans will receive access to electricity networks, another 24 million Africans – access to all-season highways through new EU investments in infrastructure projects; 105,000 students and researchers will be able to use the Erasmus+ program to study in the EU, and 750,000 people will be able to attend vocational training⁸.

In practical terms, the Africa-Europe Alliance project consists of ten types of activities:

1) improvement of conditions for investment through provision of guarantees and combined financing;

2) identification of the most promising production and processing chains and the conclusion of contracts for jobs and growth in terms of their implementation;

3) establishment by the end of 2019 of sectoral mixed-stakeholder groups on both sides for strategic development in important areas of the economy: digital, energy, transport, and agriculture;

4) strengthening the operational capacity of the African Union to promote continental integration;

5) support for specific national development initiatives for individual countries;

6) development of a strengthened dialogue and cooperation with African partners to improve the investment climate, especially as regards investment protection;

7) support for the negotiation of an EU-AU Free Trade Area, which should replace the Economic Partnership Agreement;

8) strengthening EU-Africa trade and developing conditions for the long-term formation of a comprehensive free trade area between the EU and Africa;

9) support for inter-African communications and communications along the EU-Africa line; and

10) mobilization of a package of financial resources: In the period 2014-2020, these needs were estimated at EUR 32.5 billion; then, for the period 2021-2022, funding was increased by 23%.

7 *Communication on a New Africa – Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs: Taking Our Partnership for Investment and Jobs to the Next Level*, COM/2018/643 final, Brussels, 12 September 2018 [<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1537433689163&uri=CELEX:52018DC0643>].

8 *Strengthening the EU's Partnership with Africa: A New Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs, State of the Union 2018*, the European Commission, 12 September 2018 [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/soteu2018-factsheet-africa-europe_en.pdf].

The Africa-Europe Alliance, as a result, provides for the solution of the migration issue through the implementation of programs to create new jobs, as well as the formation of a comprehensive Afro-European Intercontinental Free Trade Area in the long run.

Ukraine's European Integration and Common Interests in the African region

The current state of relations between Ukraine and the EU is regulated within the framework of the *Association Agreement* signed in 2014 between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their member states, on the one side, and Ukraine, on the other side. Although currently the EU is not ready to give Ukraine the prospect for membership, as was the case with the signing of a series of European agreements with ten Central European countries, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in February 2019 consolidated in the Constitution of Ukraine the course for acquiring the full membership status in the EU and NATO. According to the explanatory memo, consolidating the legal certainty of Ukraine's course toward EU and NATO membership at the constitutional level "will mobilize Ukrainian society and Ukrainian authorities, and promote reforms aimed at meeting the criteria for full membership in the EU and NATO".⁹

The course toward full integration into the EU requires the Ukrainian leadership not only to harmonize the country's legislation with the criteria and standards of the Union, but also to seek complementarity in the coordination of foreign policies, including in the African direction.

At the current stage, Chapter IV of the *Association Agreement* with the EU provides for a gradual integration of the Ukrainian economy into the EU's internal market within the framework of establishing a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). The distinctive feature of the Ukraine-EU DCFTA is a comprehensive program of adaptation of regulatory norms in trade-related areas to the relevant EU standards. This will largely eliminate non-tariff (technical) barriers to trade and allow for enhanced access of Ukrainian exporters to the EU's internal market. At the same time, the EU has set course toward the establishment of an intercontinental free trade area with African countries, which creates additional opportunities for Ukrainian exporters to expand trade with Africa.

A specific feature of the current stage in the EU development is Brexit, which is due to be completed on 30 March 2019. Consequently, the consolidation in the Constitution of Ukraine of an irreversible course toward EU membership is of practical value, and after the accession to the EU of Montenegro and Serbia, the Ukrainian membership application might start being considered if it is submitted.

Establishing wider trade relations with Africa, as well as involving Ukraine in solving the region's security issues, is an integral part of European aspirations. At the same time, this coincides with Ukraine's core interests in expanding its partnership with Africa.

Politically, Kyiv is interested in African countries supporting its position in international platforms, especially in the UN. In the context of Russia's hybrid aggression, the task of Ukrainian diplomacy is to counter

9 Проект Закону про внесення змін до Конституції України (щодо стратегічного курсу держави на набуття повноправного членства України в Європейському Союзі та в Організації Північноатлантичного договору) [Draft Law on Amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine (Regarding the Strategic Course of the State on Acquiring Full-fledged Membership of Ukraine in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization)], Verkhovna Rada, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=64531.

Moscow's hostile actions. In particular, the Ukrainians are trying to make clear to the African nations the threats of dealing with the Russian Federation. Russia undermines regional security by indirectly interfering in the political processes of Sudan, Libya, DR Congo, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, and a number of other countries in the region where authoritarian rule is strong. The conservative regime of President Putin shows solidarity with autocrats alike.

In economic terms, Ukraine is interested in finding more partners in trade, as well as expanding and deepening trade with them. The policy should be based on regional markets, where there is a high growth rate and demand for Ukrainian products. Ukraine needs to step up efforts in Africa's "under-traded markets".¹⁰

Therefore, the next step will be the intensification of FTA talks in promising markets of the African continent – with Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Nigeria, and the South African Republic. Ukraine also seeks to establish close contacts with the Secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which brings together 44 countries and will clearly become a key economic body in the region.

African countries are Ukraine's traditional partners in the field of military-technical cooperation. Besides, Africa's technological development is correlated with the capabilities of our state. Ukraine considers African markets to be promising for selling Ukrainian products to the machine-building industry and rendering scientific, technical, and construction services.¹¹



Establishing wider trade relations with Africa, as well as involving Ukraine in solving the region's security issues, is an integral part of European aspirations

It turns out that in parallel lines with the course toward European integration, Ukraine has become much more pro-active in the African direction, which compensates for the effects of decreasing contacts with CIS countries. Therefore, given the proximity of Africa to the EU and Ukraine, it would be appropriate to consider a new model for coordinating the policies of both EU and Ukraine in the African direction.

Search for New Approaches to Ukraine-European Cooperation with Africa

Apart from the actual trade and economic activity in Africa, Ukraine and the EU have common interests in stabilizing the situation in the region. Despite the current trend of a general decline in the flow of illegal migrants to Western Europe, ongoing military conflicts and the complicated security situation in a number of African countries will potentially keep the possibility of increase in migration. While the EU countries are the final destination for African migrants, Ukraine could be used by illegal migrants as a transit state. This creates additional risks for public safety, especially in the Black Sea region, which is becoming most vulnerable to this threat. At the same time, Ukraine's successful policy of adaptation of refugees

10 *Послання Президента України до Верховної Ради України «Про внутрішнє та зовнішнє становище України в 2018 році» (Message of the President of Ukraine to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine "On the Internal and External Situation of Ukraine in 2018")*, "НІСД", 20 September 2018 [<http://www.niss.gov.ua/articles/3133/>].

11 *Аналітична доповідь до Щорічного Послання Президента України до Верховної Ради України «Про внутрішнє та зовнішнє становище України в 2018 році» (Analytical Report to the Annual Message of the President of Ukraine to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine "On the Internal and External Situation of Ukraine in 2018")*, К.: НІСД, 2018 [http://www.niss.gov.ua/public/File/Analit_Dopovid_Poslannia_2018.pdf].

and IDPs will be of significant interest to the EU countries in terms of managing migrants and refugees.

In relation to another security component, peacekeeping, the European Union has no significant experience in conducting peacekeeping and “coercion to peace” missions. The EU carried out operations in the Balkan countries in cooperation with NATO, and they were mainly policing missions. The EU operations on the African continent were to support United Nations peacekeeping missions (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad, and Central African Republic), which also focused on policing. In turn, the Ukrainian military has an acclaimed experience in participating in a broad spectrum of peacekeeping operations (Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the Ethiopia-Eritrea border, Sudan, Southern Sudan, and DR Congo), while 44,000 Ukrainian troops gained similar combat experience, according to the Ministry of Defence¹².



Apart from the actual trade and economic activity in Africa, Ukraine and the EU have common interests in stabilizing the situation in the region

Summarizing the theses brought up, it can be concluded that there is a range of sectoral topics (trade, peacekeeping, and migration) shaping a zone of common interests for Ukraine and EU countries. At the same time, it should be noted that there are currently no formal or non-formal mechanisms for interaction within the EU-Ukraine-Africa format, although they would be very useful.

Therefore, it would be appropriate for all sides to create an intergovernmental mechanism for joint discussion and decision-making on these issues.

It could also be possible to set up discussions of tripartite issues at the “strategic African round table”. Israel could become an example of such a format. In 2018, this country successfully arranged a Strategic round table devoted solely to African issues. The event was organized by the Forum of Strategic Dialogue (FSD), the European Leadership Network (ELNET), and the European Policy Center (EPC). It was attended by 30 experts from Israel, the EU, Africa, and the United States. The event also attracted high-ranking officials from all sides.

Following the round table, a new policy approach to Africa was proclaimed, envisaging rejection of parallel policies, while establishing a common policy for the region. As a result, the new strategy consists of the following four elements¹³: 1) importance of public-private partnership and access to capital; 2) a need for African-based projects of a local nature that would belong to Africans; 3) focus on communities in the context of funding deficit; and 4) development of projects of high efficiency and flexibility.

The concept of trilateral cooperation as an option of the asymmetric “EU-Africa-Ukraine” triangle might seem difficult to implement. However, the approach that includes holding in Brussels a high-level expert discussion on Ukraine’s engagement in the implementation of the Africa-Europe Alliance appears to be productive and may give rise to a new institute of the EU foreign and security policy. On the other hand, it is

12 *Участь ЗС України у міжнародних операціях з підтримання миру і безпеки (Participation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in International Operations for Maintaining Peace and Security)*, Офіційний веб-сайт Міністерства Оборони України, February 2019 [<http://www.mil.gov.ua/diyalnist/mirovtvorchist/>].

13 *EU and Israeli Development Approaches in Sub-Saharan Africa*, “EINet”, 09 August 2018 [<https://elnetwork.eu/country/eu/eu-and-israeli-development-approaches-in-sub-saharan-africa/>].

a tool for harmonizing relations between Ukraine and the EU, which could be very useful in terms of boosting the presence of Ukrainian businesses in Africa – a region of rapid economic growth and big contrasts, but without which it is impossible to imagine the development of humankind.

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IN SEARCH OF WAYS TO THE BALKANS

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The article gives an overview of relations between Ukraine and countries of the Balkan region from the early 1990s to present day with a focus on the former Yugoslav republics. The level of intensity and substance of Ukraine-Balkans (ex-Yugoslavia) relationship varied during this period. Ukraine's activity in the region reached its peak with direct military-political support provided to Macedonia during the Macedonian-Albanian armed conflict in 2001. Since then, the Balkans has never been a priority for Ukrainian authorities. However, the Balkans, especially the countries of ex-Yugoslavia, is an important region for Ukraine as a source of experience in ending armed conflicts and successful Euro- and Euro-Atlantic integration.

Introduction

In recent years, the Balkans has not been among the foreign policy priorities for Ukraine. Kyiv keeps focus on the European Union, the Council of Europe, Germany, France, the UK, and the traditional allies from the post-Soviet space – the Baltic States, first of all, Lithuania, as well as Poland and Hungary (both neighbours and problem areas).

However, development of relations with the countries of the Balkan region has significant potential – from the point of view of bilateral relations, studying experience of peaceful settlement and overcoming consequences of conflicts, and in terms of facilitating European and Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine.

Random Acts – No Systematic Efforts

Ukrainian foreign policy aimed at the Balkans remains largely outside priority

and has a non-systematic character. One of the significant problems is the lack of Ukrainian diplomatic missions or absence of ambassadors in the countries of the region. Since 2014, Ukraine has no ambassador to Montenegro; for two years, an ambassador to Croatia (and to Bosnia and Herzegovina) has not been appointed.¹ There are no diplomatic representations between Ukraine and Albania.

The situation is aggravated also by the fact that today the Balkans is on the periphery of Ukrainian think tanks' attention. The civil society sector is not interested in the development of Ukraine's relations with the Balkan countries. Finally, the very presence of news and analysis from the Balkan region in the media is largely created through the work of "public journalism".

As a result, most of the Ukrainian government officials, politicians, experts, and journalists think of the Balkans as of an *a priori* non-priority area.

1 *Українських послів немає в дев'яти країнах (Ukraine Doesn't Have Ambassadors in Nine Countries)*, "Levyi Bereg", 20 January 2019 [https://ukr.lb.ua access: 21 January 2019].

The abovementioned does not mean that Ukraine does not maintain contacts with the countries of the region at all. Only in the past three years, numerous contacts took place, including visits of the President of Ukraine P. Poroshenko to Serbia (2018); visits of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine P. Klimkin to Albania (2016), FYR Macedonia (2018); visits of Prime Minister V. Groysman to Croatia (2017), as well as other ministers' visits to Montenegro, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the other hand, leaders of Croatia, Greece, Albania, and Bulgaria have been visiting Ukraine.

However, this has not always been the case. Once, Ukraine's relations with the Balkan countries were completely different – Ukraine had been very active in the past. Those activities even had influenced Ukraine's relations with Western countries and institutions.

Excursion into History

Ukraine's relations with the countries of the Western Balkans / former Yugoslavia have undergone several stages. On the eve of and at the very beginning of Ukraine's independence, national leadership also actively supported patriotic circles in the Yugoslav republics. Those republics were about to leave the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY).

President of the Republic of Croatia Franjo Tudjman made an important visit to Ukraine

in 1991 – then the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (UkrSSR) – following Croatia's referendum on independence. As it was noted in the final communiqué, “Tudjman informed Kravchuk about a proposal aimed at getting out of the state-political crisis in SFRY, through the creation of a Union of sovereign states, or, if that is not possible, a peaceful solution of exit.”²



development of relations with the countries of the Balkan region has significant potential – from the point of view of bilateral relations, studying experience of peaceful settlement and overcoming consequences of conflicts

In December 1991, Ukraine was one of the first states to recognize the independence of Croatia³ and Slovenia⁴. This decision was based on the desire to support the aspirations of these countries to leave the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

In the middle of 1992, the history of Ukraine's participation in peacekeeping operations begins, namely in the countries of the former Yugoslavia.⁵ Ukrainian troops participated in several peacekeeping and observation missions in the former Yugoslav republics both under the UN and NATO mandates: the United Nations Protection Forces in Croatia and in Bosnia

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- 2 *Коментарій про перебування делегації Республіки Хорватії на чолі з Президентом Республіки Ф.Туджманом в Українській РСР (Communique on the Visit of the Delegation of the Republic of Croatia Headed by the President of the Republic F. Tudjman to the Ukrainian SSR)*, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1991 [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua access 21 January 2019].
 - 3 *Постанова Президії Верховної Ради України «Про визнання державної незалежності Республіки Хорватії» (Resolution of the Presidium of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on the Recognition of State Independence of the Republic of Croatia)*, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1991 [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua access 21 January 2019].
 - 4 *Постанова Президії Верховної Ради України «Про визнання державної незалежності Республіки Словенії» (Resolution of the Presidium of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on the Recognition of State Independence of the Republic of Slovenia)*, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1991 [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua access 21 January 2019].
 - 5 *Історія миротворчої діяльності Збройних Сил України (History of Peacekeeping Activities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine)*, Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2013 [http://www.mil.gov.ua access: 22 January 2019].

and Herzegovina; NATO IFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina; NATO Stabilization Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina; UN Preventive Deployment Force in Macedonia; UN Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia; UN Mission of Observers in Prevlaka; OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission; NATO KFOR. The latest has been functioning until now with the participation of Ukrainian armed forces.⁶

At the official level, Kyiv was neutral during the development of the Yugoslav conflicts in the 1990s. A lot changed in 1999.



At the governmental level, Ukraine tried to become a mediator between the West and Belgrade, developing and promoting its own peace initiatives

The position of official Kyiv on the NATO Operation Allied Force⁷ against Belgrade (March-June 1999) was the watershed of a change in national policy on the Balkans. The Ukrainian government, influenced by the events in the former Yugoslavia, ceased to be moderately pro-Western and began to show itself as largely pro-Russian. Ukraine begins to rely in its policy on the Balkans on a foundation that consists of the Slavic brotherhood and the Orthodox faith. This was not the case when Kyiv supported the independence of Catholic Slovenia and Croatia.

The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine at that time adopted several resolutions with criticisms of the Alliance's actions. In particular, on the day the operation began, 24 March 1999, the Ukrainian parliament adopted a resolution "On the situation created by the aggressive actions of NATO against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia".⁸

At the governmental level, Ukraine tried to become a mediator between the West and Belgrade, developing and promoting its own peace initiatives. Concurrently as the Operation Allied Force was proceeding, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Borys Tarasyuk held talks with Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade, with representatives of Western countries – in Bonn, Paris, and London, with Russian colleague Igor Ivanov in Moscow.⁹

Iulia Mostova, a prominent political observer, wrote in April 1999: "Ukrainian Foreign Minister Borys Tarasyuk constantly emphasizes in the interview that official Kyiv shares Russia's position on NATO actions in the Balkans only in that part where it is about the inadmissibility of conducting military operations without the sanction of the Security Council. Yes, perhaps he tries to explain to his colleagues by visiting the European ministers of foreign affairs in search of support for the Ukrainian peace initiative that the majority of population of Ukraine have negative opinion on NATO's actions, and the presidential election is not far away ... But what can the pro-NATO minister do when the day before his departure to Washington"¹⁰

6 *Kosovo Force – United in Commitment*, NATO, 2018 [https://jfcnaples.nato.int/kfor access: 23 January 2019].

7 *NATO's Role in Kosovo*, NATO, 2007 [https://www.nato.int access: 10 January 2019].

8 *Постанова Верховної Ради України «Про ситуацію, що склалася у зв'язку з агресивними діями НАТО проти Союзної Республіки Югославії» (Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine "On the Situation Created by the Aggressive Actions of NATO against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia")*, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1999 [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua access: 15 January 2019].

9 I. Todorov, *Позиція України щодо врегулювання югославської кризи (90-ті роки XX ст.) (Ukraine's Position on Settlement of Yugoslavian Crisis (the 1990s))*, "Problems of Slavicism", Vol. 53, 2003, pp. 76–86.

10 To the NATO Summit in Washington DC in 1999.

(after a meeting with Chernomyrdin¹¹), Leonid Kuchma states that 'our views about peaceful settlement of the Yugoslav conflict completely coincide with Russian views?'"¹²

Ukraine managed to maintain a partnership with the West, in particular with NATO, but as a whole, the foreign policy vector of the country after the bombing of Yugoslavia became much less Western.

The beginning of the 2000s was under the Macedonian flag. In March 2001, Ukraine chaired the UN Security Council and was able to initiate and conduct a series of events devoted to the situation in the Balkans¹³. The central event of the Ukrainian presidency in the UN SC took place on 21 March 2001, where extremist violence, terrorist activities in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and southern Serbia (Kosovo) were condemned and resolution 1345 (2001) was unanimously adopted.¹⁴

In parallel with diplomatic efforts, official Kiev started to provide active military support to Skopje. In March 2000, the defence minister of Macedonia visited Ukraine to sign a military cooperation agreement with Ukraine. A month later, the prime ministers of both countries signed an agreement on military-technical

cooperation¹⁵. In the next year, many other military and military-technical agreements were signed between the two countries and their respective enterprises.

Active Ukrainian military assistance to Macedonia raised concerns of the United States and NATO. They believed that the saturation could hinder the process of reaching peace agreements between the Macedonians and Albanians on the basis of a political settlement. US National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, while in Kyiv on 25 July 2001, directly appealed to official Kyiv to stop delivering weapons to Macedonia.¹⁶

Since 2003, Ukrainian interest in the Balkan region has ebbed. Ukraine retained unsystematic attention on Kosovo-related issues due to the presence of the Ukrainian peacekeepers and the proclamation of independence by Kosovo in February 2008. However, the Ukrainian state does not recognize Kosovo's independence, predominantly due to the fear it can have effect on other Black Sea conflicts.

In the case of peacekeepers, a spike in attention to the topic arose due to the tragic events in the city Mitrovica in Kosovo on 17 March 2008, when deputy commander of the operative platoon of the Special Peacekeeping Subdivision of the

11 Viktor Chernomyrdin: then Russia's special envoy heading Russia's mediation efforts for Yugoslavia.

12 I. Mostovaya, *50 лет НАТО: седина в бороду (50 Years of NATO: The Older and Greyer the Beard)*, "Mirror of the Week", Issue 16, 23-29 April 1999, p. 1.

13 Рада Безпеки ООН підводить підсумки своєї роботи у березні, високо оцінюючи головування України (The UN Security Council Summed up Its Work in March, Appreciating Ukraine's Chairmanship), "Брама", 30 March 2001 [http://www.brama.com access: 10 January 2019].

14 Security Council Condemns Extremist Violence, Terrorist Activities in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Southern Serbia, United Nations, 21 March 2001 [https://www.un.org access: 11 January 2019].

15 Президент Республіки Македонії Борис Трайковски: «В трудную минуту Украина помогла нам не только словом, но и делом» (President of the Republic of Macedonia Boris Traykovski: "In Hard Times, Ukraine Helped Us Not Only in Word, but in Deed"), "Mirror of the Week", Issue 34, 06-13 September 2002, p. 1.

16 Не кажіть урядові США «так», якщо ви не здатні виконати обіцянку – Пайфер про адміністрацію Кучми (Do Not Say "Yes" to the US Government If You Cannot Fulfill the Promise – Pifer on Kuchma Administration), "Voice of America", 30 May 2017 [https://ukrainian.voanews.com access: 10 January 2019].

Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine in Kosovo, Igor Kinal, was killed¹⁷. As a result of a confrontation between protestors and peacekeepers, 20 Ukrainian law enforcement officers, who ensured the rule of law within the framework of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, were injured.

Balkans and Ukraine: From Spring 2014 to Today

Interest in the Balkan region resumed after the beginning of hostilities in the East of Ukraine.

This is due to the interest of authorities, experts, and public

- in experiences of the countries of the former Yugoslavia in:
 - the implementation of peace agreements and the end of war;
 - overcoming consequences of the war (the problem of refugees, rehabilitation of veterans);
 - fight against Russian hybrid influences;
- in studying successful Euro-Atlantic and European integration of the Balkan countries, including reforms and legislative approximation;
- because of participation of the Balkans states' citizens in the conflict in the East of Ukraine – some Croats in Ukrainian units and Serbs from Serbia and other countries of the region on the side of the pro-Russian formations.

Ukraine has changed the vector of its foreign policy due to the Russian aggression. This change affected the policy towards the Balkans, but it was still not ready to get rid of the influence of the ideas of the Slavic brotherhood and of one faith.

On 26 May 2017, the first meeting of the Working Group on Cooperation between Ukraine and Croatia took place in Zagreb, co-chaired by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Olena Zerkal. During meetings with Croatian officials, the possibility to applying the Croatian experience of peaceful reintegration of the temporarily occupied territories, in particular with regard to ensuring social protection of the population, the policy of reconciliation, information work, and infrastructure reconstruction, was considered¹⁸. A month later, in June 2017, the governments of Ukraine and Croatia signed a *Cooperation Plan for the Reintegration of Territories – the Plan of Interaction of the Ukrainian-Croatian Working Group on Cooperation*.

In April 2018 in Zagreb, the first meeting of the Joint Ukrainian-Croatian Commission on Economic Cooperation was held, headed by the Vice Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine Ivana Klympush-Tsintsadze. Croatia's experience in peaceful reintegration of territories again became one of the top topics.¹⁹

The year 2018 was full of other Ukrainian-Croatian meetings on different levels and among different ministers, where parties discussed among others the mechanism

17 У Косово від поранень помер український миротворець Ігор Кіналь (*Ukrainian Peacekeeper Igor Kinal Died in Kosovo from Wounds*), "UNRINFORM", 19 March 2008 [<http://photo.ukrinform.ua> access 05 January 2019].

18 26 травня 2017 року в Загребі відбулось перше засідання Робочої групи зі співробітництва України та Хорватії (*On May 26, 2017, the First Meeting of the Working Group on Cooperation between Ukraine and Croatia Took Place in Zagreb*), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 26 May 2017 [<https://mfa.gov.ua> access: 15 January 2019].

19 Україна предметно вивчає досвід Хорватії у сфері деокупації та реінтеграції окупованої території (*Ukraine Is Examining the Experience of Croatia in the Area of De-occupation and Reintegration of the Occupied Territory*), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 25 October 2018 [<https://mfa.gov.ua> access: 15 January 2019].

of application of the Croatian experience in the reintegration of the temporarily occupied territories in Ukraine, primarily from the point of view of providing social protection of the population, information work, reconstruction of infrastructure, and demining²⁰.

However, there is lack of analysis of implementation of other successful peace plans, besides the Croatian, both from the Ukrainian government institutions and from the side of the expert community. This is, first and foremost, the peace plan for Macedonia – the so-called Ohrid Framework Agreement²¹. This agreement led to the achievement of not only sustainable peace, but also the reconciliation of the Albanians and Macedonians.

A study of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia is important for Ukraine in order to understand possible options for peace agreements, principles for reaching real peace, and ways to implement peace agreements. In addition, the study of all circumstances of peaceful negotiations would allow the Ukrainian side to better understand the logic of international institutions and states that acted as mediators in similar talks.

Balkans as a Model for Euro- and Euro-Atlantic Integration

Considering the declared priorities of Ukraine's foreign policy, namely joining NATO and the EU, a study of the successful experience of the Euro-Atlantic and European integration of the Balkan countries is another important domain for cooperation.

The vast majority of the Balkan countries are members of NATO and the EU. Those outside the European Union are either candidates or potential members of the EU. Non-members of NATO, except Serbia and Kosovo²², have their Membership Action Plans.



A study of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia is important for Ukraine in order to understand possible options for peace agreements

However, Ukrainian authorities pay little attention to studying these states' experience and relations with the EU and NATO. With NATO, Ukraine develops an individual partnership and sometimes interacts with Georgia in this matter (Ukraine-Georgia-NATO Commission). In the context of the active growth of the dynamics of Ukraine's relations with the Alliance (despite the interference in the process of Hungary) and cooperation with NATO within the framework of the Alliance's peacekeeping contingent in Kosovo, cooperation within the framework of Euro-Atlantic integration with the Balkan countries is important, but not critical.

The Ukrainian state, the expert community, and civil society are focused on either the direct Ukraine-EU track or the framework of the Eastern Partnership (EP), which does not include the Balkan states. Simultaneously, in fact, this ignores other forms of progress on the European track. At present, Ukraine is not a member of any associations that were established specifically for the EU integration

20 *Україна предметно вивчає досвід Хорватії у сфері деокупації та реінтеграції окупованої території (Ukraine Is Examining the Experience of Croatia in the Area of De-occupation and Reintegration of the Occupied Territory)*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 25 October 2018 [<https://council.mfa.gov.ua> access: 15 January 2019].

21 *Framework Agreement, Concluded at Ohrid, Macedonia, Signed at Skopje, Macedonia on 13 August 2001*, OSCE, 2001 [<https://www.osce.org> access: 12 January 2019].

22 Partially recognized country.

preparation of the South-Eastern European countries in the fields of health, anti-corruption, free trade, youth cooperation, etc. – a large number of the initiatives that have been working for almost 20 years to implement reforms, transformations that should bring the countries of the region closer to European standards in all spheres of life.



The Ukrainian policy towards the Balkans, from the very beginning, was built on the foundation that remained an inheritance not only from the USSR but also from the Russian Empire

Some of these organizations or initiatives involve Moldova. This emphasizes that membership in the Eastern Partnership does not hinder the work in these structures, but Ukraine is not present in any of the projects mentioned, except as an observer in Centre for Security Cooperation (RACVIAC).

The question whether Ukraine should join these organizations and initiatives needs to be studied by the state, but above all, through comprehensive expert analysis. Probably this activity should have become the number one task in the Balkan direction considering Ukraine's European integration. This is especially true now when the EU is chaired by Romania – partly a Balkan country, which, moreover, is a neighbour of Ukraine.

In general, European integration should logically be the basis for cooperation between Ukraine and the Balkan countries

and a new foundation for the development of relations with the countries of the region.

Conclusion

The Ukrainian policy towards the Balkans, from the very beginning, was built on the foundation that remained an inheritance not only from the USSR but also from the Russian Empire. It was mainly formulated during the tsars' time, when the so-called "unifying factors" – namely "Slavdom", "Orthodoxy", and "brotherhood" – were introduced. It was on this basis that foreign policy support for Serbia and Macedonia arose in 1999-2001. Sympathy to Serbia under the NATO bombing and direct military assistance to Macedonia in spite of direct US prohibition have renewed and prolonged the lives of these approaches. Yet, if Ukraine really chooses the European and Euro-Atlantic path, a paradigm shift, from the Russian approach to the Euro-Atlantic one, is required for a more active and effective development of Ukraine's relations with the Balkan countries.

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