

“UKRAINE-ASEAN: VISION OF COOPERATION” BRIEF REVIEW

СТИСЛИЙ ОГЛЯД ДОКУМЕНТА «УКРАЇНА-АСЕАН: БАЧЕННЯ СПІВРОБІТНИЦТВА»

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Abstract. *The article provides the research of relations between Ukraine and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In recent years, due to the external threat to the territorial integrity of our country, Ukraine's regional policy has undergone significant transformations. The Southeast Asia (SEA) region deserves special attention especially taking into consideration the «New Horizons Policy» of Ukraine. Despite the geographical distance, both sides recognize the importance of dialogue and finding ways to cooperate. Given the role and significance of ASEAN at the regional and global levels, Ukraine seeks to deepen cooperation with the organization, to promote its national interests in the international arena and to contribute to regional stability and prosperity.*

The article highlighted a brief analysis of the document «Ukraine-ASEAN: vision for cooperation», which outlines the current state and prospects of bilateral relations. The policy-paper is explored from the perspective of a roadmap for strengthening interaction and identifying specific areas of cooperation between Ukraine and ASEAN in the political, economic and humanitarian areas.

Keywords: *Ukraine, ASEAN, cooperation, international relations.*

Анотація. *Стаття присвячена дослідженню відносин між Україною та Асоціацією країн Південно-Східної Азії (АСЕАН). В останні роки на фоні зовнішньої загрози територіальній цілісності нашої держави регіональна політика України зазнала відчутних трансформацій. Особливої уваги в рамках «Політики нових горизонтів» України заслуговує регіон Південно-Східної Азії (ПСА). Незважаючи на географічну віддаленість, обидві сторони визнають важливість діалогу та пошуку шляхів для співпраці. Враховуючи роль та значення АСЕАН на регіональному та глобальному рівнях, Україна прагне до поглиблення співробітництва з організацією для просування своїх національних інтересів на міжнародній арені та з метою сприяння регіональній стабільності і процвітання.*

У статті пропонується стислий аналіз документа «Україна - АСЕАН: бачення співробітництва», який окреслює поточний стан та перспективи розвитку двосторонніх відносин. Даний програмний документ розглядається з точки зору дорожньої карти для зміцнення взаємодії та визначення конкретних напрямів співпраці між Україною та АСЕАН у політичній, економічній та гуманітарній сферах.

Ключові слова: *Україна, АСЕАН, співробітництво, міжнародні відносини.*

Introduction. For many years, relations between independent Ukraine and the collective ASEAN were characterized by modest activity. To some extent, they could even be called limited. One of the main reasons for this is Ukraine's geographical remoteness from the Southeast Asian region. Another, no less important reason, is the absence of any coherent strategy towards Asian

partners in general or towards the countries of the South-East Asia in particular. Thus, for decades, Ukraine's relations with the region have been limited mainly to bilateral contacts with individual ASEAN member states, usually in the areas of agriculture or the military-industrial complex, like delivery of Ukrainian «Oplot» tanks to Thailand (Zhyrokhov, M., 2020).

The outcome of drastic changes taking place in such a sporadic Ukrainian approach towards its regional policy became the approval of the Foreign Policy Strategy of Ukraine in 2021 (President of Ukraine, 2021). According to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Dmytro Kuleba: «I believe that the main achievement of Ukrainian diplomacy is that we have approved a comprehensive Strategy of Ukraine's Foreign Policy for the first time in 30 years of independence. Why is this important? Because any Strategy structures the way of thinking and perceptions of the world. And most importantly, it structures our actions aimed at protecting and promoting Ukraine's national interests. In the Strategy, we have laid down a long-term state policy aimed at achieving peace, security and prosperity for Ukrainians, and establishing Ukraine as an active participant in international politics. I emphasize that this is not a declaration of intent, but a real tool» (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2021).

The main task of this conceptual document is to create a culture of functioning of the diplomatic service in accordance with the given strategic framework, where Ukrainian diplomacy would work systematically and proactively, with a focus on clear and concrete results. The Strategy covers 6 key priorities of Ukraine's foreign policy:

1. Ensuring the independence and sovereignty of Ukraine and restoring its territorial integrity.
2. Countering Russian aggression and bringing Russia to legal responsibility for its crimes against Ukraine.
3. Continuing the course towards full membership in the EU and NATO.
4. Promoting Ukrainian exports and attracting foreign investment.
5. Protecting the rights and interests of Ukrainian citizens abroad.
6. Promoting a positive image of Ukraine in the world (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2021).

The first is, of course, to ensure Ukraine's independence, state sovereignty and restoration of its territorial integrity in accordance with international law. Ukraine has fallen victim to the insidious military aggression of the Russian Federation, which continues to pose an existential threat to the political and ethnic future of our country. Therefore, it is obvious that the No.1 task for us now is to expel Russian troops from the territory of Ukraine and regain control over our sovereign territories temporarily occupied by the invader.

The next is total resistance to the enemy, which naturally follows from the previous point. Comprehensive counteraction to the aggressor by military, political, economic and international means, the final purpose of which should be to bring Russia to legal responsibility for war crimes and acts of genocide against the citizens of Ukraine.

Another task involves closer and more institutionalized cooperation with the EU and NATO, which is reflected in the fundamental legal act of our state – the Constitution of Ukraine – as stated in Articles 85, 102, 116 (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2020). Finally, the economic, humanitarian, and image components of our new strategic concept are intended to contribute to its implementation.

Therefore, the main reference points of the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry activities abroad have crystallized. First, suppression of Russian aggression. Second, Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic integration. The third one is multilateral diplomacy. And the last one is the development of Ukraine's regional policy and relations with our key international partners. In this context, during one of his public speeches, Minister Kuleba highlighted three main focuses of the Strategy implementation:

- Multilateral diplomacy (Ukraine as an active participant in international politics).
- Regional diplomacy (Ukraine co-forming a new regional security infrastructure).
- Economic diplomacy (Ukraine discovering new economic opportunities) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2021).

All together, the principles mentioned above shape the Ukrainian Asian Strategy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is an integral part of Ukraine's new foreign policy concept of 2021. During the ASEAN summit in Cambodia in November 2022, Dmytro Kuleba stressed out: «My work at the

ASEAN Summit, where Ukraine was invited for the first time in history, is a practical implementation of the Asian Strategy developed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The region is complex and promising, that's why we need to work with it. I have already met with my colleagues from Brunei, Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, Laos, and held telephone conversations with a colleague from Papua New Guinea. Wherever there is a Ukrainian interest, it needs to be outlined and realized in practice» (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2022a).

In 2013 ASEAN acknowledged the first Ambassador of Ukraine to ASEAN, and starting from that time, Ukraine has always been represented within the Association. In 2017 Ukraine began the process of accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, 1976) – one of the fundamental legal acts of ASEAN. Five years later, in 2022, Minister Kuleba on behalf of Ukraine signed the Instrument of accession to the Treaty. The procedure of accession completed in December 2023, when the Verkhovna Rada adopted the Law «On Ukraine's Accession to the Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation in Southeast Asia» (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2023).

In August 2021 Ukraine obtained the Observer status in the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA). It ensures Ukraine's representation by two members of our parliament in the annual session of the ASEAN General Assembly. The same year the first in Ukraine Center for ASEAN Studies was launched at the Educational and Research Institute of International Relations of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. The main task of the center is to establish effective interaction between researchers and scientists, develop humanitarian, educational and interpersonal contacts between Ukraine and ASEAN countries (Government portal, 2021).

The access to the Southeast Asian market opens a wide range of economic opportunities for Ukraine. That is possible through joining the free trade zone with the countries of the Association, as well as concluding a cooperation agreement between the Council of Exporters and Investors of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and the ASEAN Business Council. A free trade zone with ASEAN will let our country trade its goods without additional fees.

On the other hand, given the current security situation in Eastern Europe, the need for ASEAN's support of Ukraine on all issues related to the Russian-Ukrainian war is a priority. The Association is neutral, which is proved by the few joint statements of the organization. Despite the well-known ASEAN principle of non-interference in conflicts of third countries, establishing political and economic cooperation with the Association would make it possible to increase its support of Ukraine and, thus, strengthen the existing mechanisms of bilateral cooperation (Terletskyi, O., 2022).

The purpose of this article is to provide a brief analysis of the condition and prospects of development of bilateral relations between Ukraine and ASEAN taking into consideration the «Ukraine-ASEAN: Vision of Cooperation» policy paper as a roadmap for further cooperation in the areas of Food and Agriculture, Digital Sector, Trade, Energy, Disasters Management, Demining, Social and Cultural Cooperation.

The research results. For more than thirty years of Ukraine's independence, our foreign policy has not paid sufficient attention to Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific region. It took a long time before in 2021 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine has finally approved the Asian Strategy in accordance with the Foreign Policy Strategy. Central Asia, the South Caucasus, the Gulf region, Southeast Asia, the Indo-Pacific, ASEAN, Sub-Saharan and North Africa were named as the key geographical priorities that are to be developed within the Strategy. It was a significant and, in some extent, even crucial indicator of Ukraine's renewed approach to the Eastern vector of our foreign policy that means not only nominal economic presence but legal and political engagement in different regional issues.

The Foreign Policy Strategy of Ukraine (paragraphs 146; 149) proclaims establishing cooperation on economic and trade issues, the implementation of joint projects with regional integration associations, primarily the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The active development of bilateral cooperation with Southeast Asian countries will focus on the formation of free trade zones, expansion of cooperation ties in the military-technical, aerospace, and scientific and technical spheres. Ukraine will also make efforts to institutionalize relations with ASEAN. A promising direction is to establish cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to

facilitate the attraction of investments to Ukraine's industrial and agricultural sectors from the region's financial contributors (President of Ukraine, 2021).

The next major step towards the implementation of the Strategy was a joint event entitled «Ukraine-ASEAN: vision of cooperation» held in February 2024 in Kyiv. The event in a hybrid format was held with the participation of representatives of the diplomatic corps accredited in Ukraine, the ASEAN Secretariat, scientific and expert circles of Ukraine and the Southeast Asian region. The participants emphasized the importance of Accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia ratified by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Iryna Borovets emphasized that according to the Foreign Policy Strategy of Ukraine and the Asian Strategy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the next step of Ukraine's relations with ASEAN shall be obtainment of the status of Sectoral Dialogue Partner of the Association (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2024a).

As a result of the meeting, the Foreign Ministry of Ukraine presented the policy paper «Ukraine-ASEAN: vision of cooperation» (Ukraine-ASEAN: vision of cooperation, 2024). The document was made by the Fourth Territorial Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. The primary objective of this policy-paper was to define and establish sectoral dialogic cooperation between Ukraine and ASEAN. It expressed Ukraine's vision of cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and intended to strengthen relations and ensure effective cooperation between the Parties.

The document starts with a brief review of Ukraine-ASEAN relations. It allows to get acquainted with some statistics data of both Ukraine and ASEAN as well as the chronology of our bilateral relations during past years. The further exploration of the structure of the paper shows that it is defined by several key sectors of mutual interest with the highest potential of cooperation, namely: Sectoral Dialogue Partnership, Food and Agriculture, Digital Sector, Trade, Energy, Disaster Management, Demining, Social and Cultural Cooperation.

Sectoral Dialogue Partnership. On 8 June 2023, Ukraine submitted a draft Priority Plan for the ASEAN and Ukraine Sectoral Dialogue Partnership to the Secretariat of ASEAN, which is subject to consideration as of February 2024. Ukraine intends to establish the ASEAN-Ukraine Joint Sectoral Cooperation Committee (JSCC ASEAN-Ukraine). The competence of the JSCC ASEAN-Ukraine may include coordination and monitoring of achievement of common goals, development and adoption of the legal framework for cooperation between Ukraine and ASEAN, providing recommendations on improving cooperation efficiency, as well as setting of working groups in the relevant areas. It is also important to establish the practice of Ukraine's consultations with relevant ASEAN sectoral bodies and to hold such consultations at the high and highest levels to ensure a significant level of cooperation (Ukraine-ASEAN: vision of cooperation, 2024).

In 2023 series of workshops and events have been held to make Ukraine and ASEAN closer to each other with the participation of the ASEAN Research Centre in Ukraine, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine, the Ministry of Infrastructure of Ukraine, the Ministry of Digital Transformation and relevant ASEAN institutions or its member states authorities (Ukraine-ASEAN: vision of cooperation, 2024).

Food and Agriculture. ASEAN has adopted a variety of strategic documents addressing nutrition, food safety and food security including the Strategic Plan for ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry 2016-2025 (ASEAN Community Vision 2025, 2015), ASEAN Integrated Food Security Framework, and Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security in the ASEAN region 2021-2025 (AIFS and SPA-FS in the ASEAN Region 2021-2025, 2020).

Ukraine seeks for cooperation on food and agriculture. It has initiated programs to secure global food and agriculture, including the «Black Sea Grain Initiative» (United Nations, 2023). 60% of the grain export went to the countries of Asia and Africa. Ukraine also initiated the humanitarian program «Grain from Ukraine» (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2024b), joined by 34 countries. In 2023 a new route for the export of Ukrainian agricultural products called the «Grain corridor» was announced by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Ukraine plans to partner with ASEAN in Food and Agriculture through: food trade facilitation; gathering and analysing data regarding food trade and agriculture; elimination of technical barriers for food and agriculture trade, as well as promotion of goods sea movement; preparation of roadmap

for securing food and agriculture supply chains from Ukraine to ASEAN member states; conducting consultations on food and agriculture at the state level of Ukraine and the intergovernmental level of ASEAN; advocating and coordinating for global food security; studying and researching suitable mechanisms for strengthening ties between Ukraine and ASEAN in food and agriculture; arrangement of consultative meetings/forums among non-state stakeholders (i.e. partners, private sector, academics, etc.); capacity building efforts between Ukraine and ASEAN, work-shops, training programs, technical assistance, institutional strengthening, and events for sharing knowledge and expertise (Ukraine-ASEAN: vision of cooperation, 2024).

Digital Sector. Cooperation in Digital Sector is guided by the ASEAN Digital Master plan 2021-2025 (ASEAN Digital Masterplan 2021-2025, 2021). It contributes to secure and trusted digital environment, infrastructure, services, e-government services, and digitally inclusive society in ASEAN. The Association develops its digital platforms like ASEAN Single Window which is developed for the exchange of trade-related documents.

Ukraine is ready to share its own successful experience in development of digital platforms. The Ukrainian platform «Dii» combines a mobile application with access to citizens' digital documents and a single portal of public services for the population and businesses. According to Mykhailo Fedorov, Vice Prime Minister for Innovations, Development of Education, Science, and Technologies of Ukraine, one of the crucial keys to Ukraine's success is permanent, systematic cooperation among the government, private and public companies, including transferring data registers to the cloud. Another digital system «Trembita» is an information and communication decentralized system of electronic interaction designed for automation and technological support of data exchange. It has a high level of security thanks to digital signature and encryption of all transmitted data (Ukraine-ASEAN: vision of cooperation, 2024).

Ukraine plans to participate in: enhancement of cooperation to promote cyber resilience, security and interoperability in the digital environment; cooperation in the field of electronic service development; joint efforts in the field of digital literacy development; initiation of joint projects aimed at the development of digital infrastructure; exchange of experience regarding digital strategies, development plans of relevant authorities, and their responsibilities in the field of digital transformation; dialogue and knowledge sharing on approaches to international law, cybersecurity policy and regulation aiming to harmonize practices and promote international cybersecurity standards; promotion of information sharing and collaboration on cyber matters, including the exchange of information on cyber threats, best practices, and emerging technologies; joint research and development projects related to cybersecurity to advance innovation in the field; exchange of best practices and skills regarding the development of next-generation (5G) mobile networks (Ukraine-ASEAN: vision of cooperation, 2024).

Trade. The Association is working hard on improving regional cooperation and integration when we talk about trade. Initiatives such as Free Trade Areas (FTA) contribute to improving market access, reducing tariffs, and simplifying trade procedures. The ASEAN's FTA is one of the largest and most significant in the world. The implementation of the Trade in Goods Agreement by ASEAN member states has resulted in the significant elimination of tariffs (ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement Summary Fact Sheet, 2021).

ASEAN is based on the principles of mutually beneficial cooperation and dialogue. Regular meetings at various levels, such as the ASEAN Leaders' Summit, the ASEAN Investment Forum and other events, provide an opportunity to discuss cooperation issues. ASEAN has several trade promotion platforms, including the ASEAN Chamber of Commerce & Industry and the ASEAN Business Advisory Council. These platforms facilitate the exchange of information and experience in the fields of trade and investment (Ukraine-ASEAN: vision of cooperation, 2024).

Ukraine has already developed strong economic ties with ASEAN, and the number of bilateral trade agreements with ASEAN member states. In general, the top exports of Ukraine are iron ore, seed oils, wheat, corn. The top imports from Ukraine are refined petroleum, cars, petroleum gas, packaged medicaments, and coal briquettes (The Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2022). The turnover of goods between Ukraine and ASEAN member states in 2023 constitutes \$1,846 billion. Total exports from Ukraine to ASEAN member states from January to November 2023 amount to

\$0,445 billion. Total imports from ASEAN member states to Ukraine in 2023 amount to \$1,401 billion (Ukraine-ASEAN: vision of cooperation, 2024).

Ukraine plans to partner with ASEAN through: sharing knowledge and experience of keeping trade resilient and secure in uncertain times; promotion of trade and investment between Ukraine and ASEAN; facilitation of trade and investment relations, including chambers of commerce, cooperation workshops, conferences, seminars, business fora, and other relevant activities; exploring the possibility of cooperation to promote private sector engagement and business-to-business exchanges; reduction of customs duties, tariff and non-tariff barriers in trade; development of trade routes and infrastructure for trade; cooperation in the fields of tourism, standardization and certification (Ukraine-ASEAN: vision of cooperation, 2024).

Energy. In 2020 ASEAN adopted the ASEAN Plan of Action for Energy Cooperation 2016-2025 (APAEC), according to which «energy» is defined as a key component in advancing the ASEAN Economic Community's pursuit of an inclusive and dynamic regional economic integration towards 2025 and beyond (ASEAN Plan of Action for Energy Cooperation 2016-2025, 2020). APAEC established that ASEAN will expand partnerships with Dialogue Partners and International Organisations, and advance energy policy and planning to accelerate the region's energy transition and resilience.

In 2019 Ukraine entered the TOP 10 countries in the world in terms of renewable energy development, and in 2020 entered the TOP 5 European countries regarding solar energy development (Konechenkov, A., Omelchenko, V., (2022)). Today, Ukraine is rethinking its energy system to respond both to security challenges and decarbonization goals. The mission of the Energy Strategy of Ukraine until 2050 is to create conditions for the sustainable development of the national economy by ensuring access to reliable, stable and modern sources of energy (Ministry of Energy of Ukraine, 2022b). The goals of the Energy Strategy of Ukraine 2050 are to achieve the maximum level of climate neutrality and maximum reduction of coal use in the energy sector, to renew and modernize energy infrastructure, to increase the efficiency of the use of resources in the energy sector, to provide the energy sector with its resources, taking economic feasibility into account. Ukraine also develops alter-native energy sources, new products and innovative solutions in the energy sector (Ukraine-ASEAN: vision of cooperation, 2024).

Ukraine intends to partner with ASEAN in Energy through: exchange knowledge and experience of keeping the energy resilient and secured in uncertain time; sharing knowledge and experience with regards to security standards and development of safety measures for nuclear facilities; exploring avenues for future collaboration in the area of energy security, including the safe and sustainable development of low-carbon energy sources and technologies; promotion of energy efficiency and conservation practices; exploring opportunities for cooperation to support the efforts of ASEAN member states to strengthen their capacity in the areas of energy security and the safe, sustainable development of renewable and alternative energy sources; supporting the efforts to promote energy technologies, energy efficiency, and conservation practices (Ukraine-ASEAN: vision of cooperation, 2024).

Disaster Management. ASEAN member states are located in high seismic activity area, making them vulnerable to different geological disasters (Synthesis Report on Ten ASEAN Countries Disaster Risks Assessment, 2010). ASEAN has unique experience in managing natural and man-made disasters. One of the key features is its approach to cooperation and joint action. ASEAN member states actively share knowledge, technology and resources to support those affected by natural disasters. This commonality of approach ensures effectiveness in disaster response and recovery.

ASEAN has developed numerous platforms for discussing and coordinating actions in the event of natural and man-made disasters. One of them is the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management, established in 2003, which developed the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) in 2005, which is a regional legally binding agreement that binds ASEAN member states together to promote regional cooperation and collaboration in reducing disaster losses and intensifying joint emergency response to disasters in the ASEAN region (ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, 2005).

Ukraine has experience in dealing with natural and man-made disasters as well. It faced the largest man-made disaster in human history – the Chernobyl catastrophe – when a nuclear reactor was destroyed. Ukraine also experienced the flooding of the Kherson region after bombing of the Kakhovka hydroelectric dam by Russia in 2023.

Nevertheless, there have been successful cases of cooperation between Ukraine and some ASEAN member states in this respect. For example, the rescue of a junior football team and their coach from the Tam Luang Cave in Thailand in 2018. Ukrainian rescuers were helping people in extremely difficult conditions. A team of Ukrainian divers laid underwater guide cables in complete darkness, which made it possible to save children's lives (UNIAN, 2018).

Ukraine plans to partner with ASEAN in Disaster Management through: sharing knowledge and experience of maintaining resilient and secured disaster management in uncertain times; capacity-building activities and sharing best practices and experiences on disaster prevention and mitigation, risk assessment and monitoring, preparedness and response; supporting disaster recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction and knowledge and innovation management, as well as disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and ecosystem-based adaptation; exploring the possibility of cooperation with the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management and the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management; promotion of science, technology and innovation cooperation on prevention, mitigation and risk reduction of natural disasters; exchange of experts for skills training and other initiatives (Ukraine-ASEAN: vision of cooperation, 2024).

Demining. ASEAN's joint efforts ensure security in the Southeast Asian region through demining cooperation. In particular, the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC) is a center of excellence under the ASEAN Security Cooperation to encourage efforts to address landmines and explosive remnants of war for interested ASEAN member states. Inaugurated on 25 May 2016, the Center aims to collectively tackle the humanitarian aspects of landmines and Explosive remnants of war through an integrated approach of experience sharing, skills training, and other capacity-building activities. ASEAN is also an active participant in international demining efforts. The organization cooperates with other regional and international organizations (ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center, 2023).

Speaking of Ukraine, its mined areas make a huge humanitarian problem. Because of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022 Ukraine has become the most mined country in Europe. According to the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, the total area affected by mines, shells, and bombs is 174,000 km². Furthermore, it will take at least 10 years to completely clear and undermine the entire contaminated Ukrainian area (Government portal, 2023).

Ukraine intends to partner with ASEAN in Demining through: exploration of the possibility of cooperation between relevant Ukrainian authorities and ARMAC; cooperation with regards to demining of marine areas, areas affected by natural disasters and/or conflicts; promotion of science technology and innovation cooperation on demining; performing consultations and workshops regarding demining best practices; promotion of the exchange of demining experts for skills training and other initiatives (Ukraine-ASEAN: vision of cooperation, 2024).

Social and Cultural Cooperation. The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) was created to realize ASEAN citizens' full potential. One of its foundations is the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025, adopted by the ASEAN Leaders at the 27th ASEAN Summit on 22 November 2015 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025, 2016). In addition to the ASCC, the ASEAN Strategic Plan for Culture and Arts 2016-2025 aims to deepen an ASEAN mindset and facilitate intercultural dialogue among the peoples of ASEAN through the engagement of various stakeholders in raising awareness on, and appreciation for, the histories, cultures, arts, traditions and values of the ASEAN region (ASEAN Strategic Plan for Culture and Arts 2016-2025, 2016).

The Strategy of Public Diplomacy of Ukraine 2021-2025 is all about popularization and sharing national achievements and experience in the field of culture with citizens of other countries for better understanding and trust. The above includes the promotion of modern Ukrainian cinema, music, theatre, performance art, literature, classical and modern visual art, creative industries, and international research projects in the field of culture and art. Furthermore, it includes the popularization of the Ukrainian language in the world as well as the promotion of Ukrainian cultural

heritage and projects in the field of culture and art of representative indigenous peoples and national minorities (Strategy of Public Diplomacy of Ukraine 2021-2025, 2021).

Ukraine is willing to expand its cultural ties with ASEAN countries for the mutual exchange of cultural values and the promotion of mutual understanding. Cooperation shall include the exchange of arts, folklore, literature, languages, cultural and religious festivals, and the mutual holding of Days/Weeks of Ukrainian and ASEAN member states cultures.

Ukraine plans to partner with ASEAN in Social and Cultural Cooperation through: promotion of greater awareness of each other's traditions, heritage, and cultures through industries, cultural exchanges, events, festivals, and art exhibitions; exploring parliamentary cooperation through the framework of the AIPA and on a bilateral basis; exploring the ways of intercultural cooperation between Crimean Tatar and citizens of ASEAN member states; promoting autonomous and direct collaboration between universities of Ukraine and ASEAN member states; supporting human capital development and cooperation in education and training through information sharing, exchange programmes, capacity building, and skills development; promotion of creative industry cooperation in areas such as music, craft, cuisine, etc.; promotion of people-to-people contacts, networking, and exchange of visits between government officials, artists, students, youth, academicians, scholars, librarians, media, community representatives, as well as diplomats; encouraging collaboration and direct contacts between public libraries for the purpose of exchanging information materials and publications (Ukraine-ASEAN: vision of cooperation, 2024).

Conclusions. Ukraine still suffers the burden of the war waged by Russia against our country. What makes it worse is that we have to burn out our limited resources to fight back the invasion instead of facilitating development projects or international initiatives. At the same time, the Russian threat has become a 'bitter' experience for Ukraine that has forced us to rethink the shortcomings of our foreign policy paradigm. The war has encouraged our country to seek new, modern and flexible forms of dialogue with those partners who, unfortunately, have never been on the top of Ukraine's international agenda. In recent decades, Ukraine has focused most of its efforts in the international arena on the vector of European and Euro-Atlantic integration, ignoring other regions that are no less important in terms of geopolitics like Asia, Africa, or Latin America. Now more than ever, Ukraine understands the need for international support not only from the so-called large and developed countries, but also from medium, small and developing countries. After all, the international community is not limited to the UN Security Council or the G20. Russia's military aggression against Ukraine has shown how every country in the world, regardless of its gross domestic product or geographical location, can contribute to the process of restoring international peace, stability and security.

For the resistance to be effective, Ukraine needs allies. The attitude of Europe and the United States of America is more or less unanimous and clear towards Russian invasion. The opposite situation takes place among Asian countries, for instance. Some countries have been favorably disposed towards Vladimir Putin's regime for many years due to their authoritarian form of government. Other countries, mainly due to both lack of diplomatic communication from Ukraine and lasting Russian propaganda from the opposite side, simply do not understand the context thus calling the war a 'conflict' or 'situation', etc. Other states take a neutral position, which is more likely to be a disadvantage for us in our asymmetric war against Russia.

Such international context is the reason for Ukraine's foreign policy transformation. Following the adoption of the new Foreign Policy Strategy, Ukraine is turning its attention to Southeast Asia and to the ASEAN member states the region is associated with. The Association is an extremely promising partner for Ukraine. This is primarily due to the political and economic weight of the organization in the SEA. However, in order to ensure a favorable positioning, Ukraine must first establish mutually beneficial bilateral relations with all ten ASEAN countries. The Observer status in the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly will solely contribute to this.

Most important areas of potential interaction between Ukraine and ASEAN were formulated in policy-paper «Ukraine-ASEAN: A Vision for Cooperation» in 2024. The document provides information on such possible areas as agriculture, food, energy, the digital sector, trade, disaster management, demining and cross-cultural dialogue. Given the realities, the most relevant areas of cooperation for Ukraine at the moment are certainly demining and disaster management. The unique

experience of ASEAN member states may be extremely handful and valuable for us. The most promising area of bilateral cooperation in terms of dynamics of growth is, undoubtedly, the digital sector. This is where Ukraine already has something to be proud of and something to offer. Ukrainian digital platform «Diia» is considered to be one of the most advanced and user-friendly public services applications in the world. Trade and agriculture continue to hold traditionally stable position in bilateral relations, but they also have a chance to reach a new level thanks to direct access to Southeast Asian markets and the elimination of trade barriers and custom duties. In the future, Ukraine plans to become a sectoral partner and later to acquire the status of a development partner. This will greatly strengthen Ukraine's economic position in the world. Finally, we should not forget about the socio-cultural exchange between our countries. Intensifying contacts at the horizontal level will help to deepen mutual understanding of our communities, expanding the scope of socio-political understanding of the context of certain events.

The document is not a step-by-step guide, but it sheds light on the prospects for further cooperation in a number of areas of common interest. Even now, some of them are highly likely to become a long-lasting story. However, only a consistent state policy of strengthening relations with the countries of the South Asia will allow Ukraine to enlist the support of ASEAN and improve its position in the world.

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