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“Singapore and Ukraine: A Window to the South-East Asia”

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Singapore and Ukraine: A Window to the South-East Asia

Sergiy Gerasymchuk

Summary

Ukraine-Singapore relations offer a lot of untapped potential for mutually beneficial cooperation, especially in the spheres of cultural diplomacy, security and economic development. Strengthening ties in these domains can boost Ukraine's international standing and help the two countries exchange expertise and resources.

Taking the Ukraine-Singapore relations to a deeper level should factor in the current international and regional security context, Singapore's current interests, and national strategies on these aspects. In addition to the conventional areas of cooperation, engaging Singapore as a potential mediator in Ukraine's pursuit of its regional objectives – including the establishment of a working format of cooperation with ASEAN – holds promise.

Apart from that, Ukraine should advocate for Singapore to join some sectors of its Peace Formula, such as food and environmental security, as well as engage Singapore along with South Korea in the restoration and management of Ukraine's water resources.

Exchange of expertise in resilience building, including information and cyber security, and protection of ports from blockade and attacks, including by sea drones, can be a standalone aspect of cooperation.

Engaging Singapore in reconstructing some of Ukraine's regions where Singapore already has established partnerships holds promise. In this context, Ukraine can offer Singapore to be a patron of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast as it has a special status in trade with Singapore, which can include trilateral consultations between Ukraine, Singapore, and the Czech Republic, as the latter has already manifested its interest in the reconstruction of Dnipropetrovsk region.

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INTRODUCTION

Ukraine-Singapore relations offer untapped potential for mutually beneficial cooperation, especially in spheres of cultural diplomacy, security, and economic development. Strengthening ties in these areas can boost Ukraine's international standing and contribute to the exchange of knowledge and resources between the two countries.

The interaction between Ukraine and Singapore tends to be poorly researched, even in academic works on Southeast Asia. Despite active contacts and some mutually beneficial cooperation, Ukrainian diplomats and analysts have not always paid due attention to Ukraine's relations with Singapore. The interest of Ukrainian top officials in developing relations with Asian countries increased substantially in 2020 when Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted the Asian Week¹ and started working on Ukraine's Asia Strategy. In 2021, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba marked the first achievements in Asia², highlighting it as a priority.

In 2022, Asia became increasingly important for Ukraine's foreign policy³ as the country sought the support of the so-called Global South – through the implementation of the Ukrainian Peace Formula and the establishment of a framework for stronger international support, among other things. In this context, Ukraine-Singapore relations call for a detailed analysis, new strategies and contact points based on both countries' priorities and key strategic objectives.

Ukraine-Singapore relations have a long history. On January 2, 1992, Singapore recognised Ukraine's independence. The two countries established diplomatic relations on March 31, 1992. For a while after that, their contacts were largely formal and limited. Ukraine-Singapore diplomatic relations got a new impetus in 2002 when Ukraine opened its embassy in Singapore.

In 2003, then Ukraine's Foreign Minister Anatoliy Zlenko visited Singapore for the first high-level visit. Throughout the 2000s, Ukraine and Singapore signed the Investment Guarantee Agreement,⁴ introducing the most favoured treatment, among other things. In 2007, they started the Free Trade Agreement negotiations⁵ (the free

¹ Dmytro Kuleba: Singapore To Become Key Ukrainian Partner in Asia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 03.04.2020, <https://mfa.gov.ua/en/news/dmytro-kuleba-singapore-become-key-ukrainian-partner-asia>

² Міністр закордонних справ України Дмитро Кулеба назвав топ-10 перемог відомства у 2021 році, Ukrinform, 17.12.2021, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-politics/3370830-kuleba-nazvav-desat-peremog-mzs-u-2021-roci.html>

³ Дмитро Кулеба: Азійська стратегія вже приносить конкретні результати та відкриває нові горизонти для України, Міністерство закордонних справ України, 11.11.2022, <https://mfa.gov.ua/news/dmitro-kuleba-azijska-strategiya-vzhe-prinosit-konkretni-rezultati-ta-vidkrivaye-novi-gorizonti-dlya-ukrayini>

⁴ Ukraine and Singapore Sign Investment Guarantee, Ministry of Trade and Industry of Singapore, 18.09.2006, <https://www.mti.gov.sg/Newsroom/Press-Releases/2006/09/Ukraine-and-Singapore-Sign-Investment-Guarantee>

⁵ Ukraine, Singapore begin FTA negotiations, Bilaterals, 08.05.2007, <https://www.bilaterals.org/?ukraine-singapore-begin-fta&lang=en>

trade area has not been finalised yet) as part of the bilateral cooperation development. It was in this period that the key narratives in bilateral relations emerged, focusing on trade without paying much attention to the political component.

In the 2010s, the Ukraine-Singapore relations included a series of high- and top-level visits. In 2011 and 2014, Ukrainian presidents Viktor Yanukovich and Petro Poroshenko visited Singapore. In 2017, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin visited Singapore,⁶ followed by then-Interior Minister Arsen Avakov⁷ in 2018. In January 2020, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Vadym Prystaiko [visited](#) Singapore,⁸ focusing on the Ukraine-Singapore business forum organisation and preparation of a visit of Singapore's business representatives to Ukraine. These steps laid important foundations for further development of bilateral economic cooperation.

In June 2022, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy spoke at the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue, Asia's biggest annual defence forum, and Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov spoke there in June 2023⁹. Building regional support amid the Russian invasion was Ukraine's key objective for the forum.

From Singapore's side, in 2010, Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew visited Ukraine and in 2015, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Law Kasiviswanathan Shanmugam.

By April 2023, Ukraine and Singapore had 16 bilateral agreements and memoranda. These cover treaties for the avoidance of double taxation and mutual investment protection.

Around 450 Ukrainians¹⁰ live in Singapore. The Ukrainian Club in Singapore was founded in 2014 and officially registered in June 2015. It brings together dozens of Ukrainians residing in Singapore.

⁶ Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Pavlo Klimkin paid an official visit to the Republic of Singapore, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 24.01.2017, <https://singapore.mfa.gov.ua/en/news/53987-vidbuvsya-oficijnij-vizit-ministra-zakordonnih-sprav-ukrajini-pavla-klimkina-do-respubliki-singapur>

⁷ Арсен Аваков: Україну буде представлено у Глобальному центрі інновацій Інтерполу в Сінгапурі, Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 29.10.2018, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/arsen-avakov-ukrayinu-bude-predstavleno-u-globalnomu-centri-innovacij-interpolu-u-singapuri>

⁸ Official Visit of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, His Excellency Vadym Prystaiko, 12 to 14 January 2020, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore, 13.01.2020, <https://www.mfa.gov.sg/Newsroom/Press-Statements-Transcripts-and-Photos/2020/01/13012020-Ukraine-FM>

⁹ Shangri-La Dialogue, <https://www.iiss.org/events/shangri-la-dialogue/shangri-la-dialogue-2023/>

¹⁰ Ukraine-Singapore, Embassy of Ukraine to Singapore, 14.04.2021, <https://singapore.mfa.gov.ua/en/ukrayina-ta-singapur/ukrayina-ta-singapur-all>

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF SINGAPORE'S FOREIGN POLICY: BALANCING BETWEEN THE US AND CHINA

When shaping its foreign policy, Singapore prioritises ensuring its own security based on economic liberalism and commitment to pragmatic neutrality. It is the latter that determines its approach to relations with China and the US. In its relations with the US, Singapore has not demonstrated any objections against US engagement in the Indo-Pacific since the Cold War, especially amid China's military modernisation. Access to the US market that shaped the foundation for Singapore's economic miracle is also a driver behind close economic ties between the two countries. According to Singapore's Department of Statistics¹¹, in 2022, its trade with the US was US\$132bn. At the same time, Singapore's trade with other partners has grown in recent years. China is currently its top trade partner at US\$175bn (trade with Mainland China), followed by Malaysia at US\$153bn. Notably, close economic ties with China do not hamper Singapore's substantial trade with Taiwan, Singapore's fourth largest economic partner with US\$114bn in trade.

Strong diplomatic, military, and economic relations with the US balance Singapore's cultural, geographic and economic proximity to China. Additionally, Singapore relies on Free Trade Agreements with the world's key economic actors.¹² It has FTAs with China, the US, the EU, India, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Australia, Turkey, the UK, and a number of other countries. Notably, an FTA with Singapore was the first such an agreement the US concluded with an Asian nation.

Singapore's military power plays an important role in its standing in the international arena. However, it relies on the wider concept of Total Defence¹³ in shaping its military capacities. This includes six key components: military, civil, economic, social, digital, and psychological defence. Military defence means having a strong Singapore Armed Forces to deter aggression and protect the country. Civil defence provides for the safety and basic needs of the community so that life may go on as normal as possible during emergencies. Economic defence is the government, business, and industry organising themselves to support the economy at all times. Social defence is about people living and working together in harmony and spending time on the interests of the nation and community. Digital defence requires every individual to deal with threats from the digital domain. Psychological defence is each person's commitment to and confidence in the nation's future.

¹¹ Singapore's International Trade, According to Singapore's Department of Statistics, <https://www.singstat.gov.sg/modules/infographics/singapore-international-trade>

¹² An Overview of Singapore's Free Trade Agreements, ASEAN Briefing, 01.08.2023, <https://www.aseanbriefing.com/news/an-overview-of-singapores-free-trade-agreements/>

¹³ What is Total Defence, Singapore Civil Defence Force, <https://www.scdf.gov.sg/home/community-volunteers/community-preparedness/total-defence>

Regional policy plays an important role in Singapore's foreign policy shaping. It includes involvement in regional alliances – primarily the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN. The goal of this alliance is to boost economic development and social progress and to protect peace and stability in the region. The purpose of ASEAN is largely to strengthen the international standing of small and mid-sized countries of the region amid political and economic competition for influence among the great powers, primarily the US, Japan, and China.

Singapore's multiethnic and [multicultural composition](#)¹⁴ is one of the driving factors behind its foreign policy. Its population include 74% of the Chinese, 13% of the Malay, and 9% of Indians origin. Ever since the Singapore state was established, its predominantly Chinese political leadership has sought to conduct a policy that shapes the Singaporean identity rather than provokes racial tensions. In order to support its multiculturalism and build an internationally competitive workforce, English was chosen as the main language of education. This did not exclude the learning of native languages, including Chinese, Tamil, and Malay, by representatives of the respective ethnic groups. While Singapore's state policies focus on integration and inclusivity, ethnic tensions occasionally emerge. The "curry incident"¹⁵ is one of the examples: it broke out in 2011, triggering criticism from the Indian population on the one hand and protests against immigrants from Mainland China on the other hand.

While the Chinese comprise the majority of the Singapore population, the country tries to hold a neutral position in its relations with China, avoiding further clashes. Meanwhile, cultural differences hamper deeper relations between Singapore and the US.

Non-resident population make up a substantial share of the population in Singapore. Americans, Europeans, and other foreign workers account for around 25% of its 5.92 million population¹⁶.

The need to constantly balance domestically and internationally requires Singapore's leadership to be exceptionally cautious in its foreign policy decisions. In the future, the potential intensification of cultural and political confrontations will dictate caution in its foreign policy decisions and ambivalence similar to where Singapore stands on Ukraine.

Singapore's political leaders supported the proactive role of the US in the region during the Cold War. Despite differences in views regarding democracy and human rights, such as freedom of expression and independent judiciary, the US-Singapore

¹⁴ Key Findings, Census of Population 2020 Statistical Release, Singapore Department of Statistics, 2020, <https://www.singstat.gov.sg/-/media/files/publications/cop2020/sr1/findings.pdf>

¹⁵ Learning from Recent Racial Incidents, SG101, <https://www.sg101.gov.sg/social-national-identity/case-studies/learning/>

¹⁶ Population in brief, Strategy Group, Singapore's Prime Minister Office, <https://www.strategygroup.gov.sg/media-centre/publications/population-in-brief/>

bilateral relations were close both in the diplomatic and military domain. In one illustration, the US fleet has been anchoring at the Changi Naval Base every year since 1999. The US-Singapore military ties expanded after the US decreased its military presence in the Philippines in 1992. The US can use the Changi Naval Base through 2035 based on the current agreements.¹⁷ At the same time, the sides insist that the port is not the US base even though Singapore has the second largest presence of the US military in Asia¹⁸, second only to Japan.

Singapore has an equally cautious approach to relations with China. Diplomatic relations between Singapore and China were established in 1990. The evolution of their relations was irregular and lengthy. Singapore and its ASEAN partners initially tended to question China's motivation and approached relations cautiously. It was only in 2015, during the visit of China's leader Xi Jinping to Singapore, that the sides announced the establishment of the All-Round Cooperative Partnership Progressing with the Times. In 2023, they announced the establishment of the All-Round High-Quality Future Oriented Partnership.¹⁹

Both sides are investing efforts in building business-oriented and transparent rules of cooperation. Their priorities include: cooperation in telecommunications; food security that includes information sharing to understand better the regulatory framework and food security policies of both states; work of supreme courts of Singapore and China on framework solutions for dispute mediation for the Belt and Road Initiative, a global infrastructure project promoted proactively by China until recently; environmental security: China and Singapore are developing joint research initiatives in this sphere, and cooperation in culture, arts, and people-to-people exchange. At the same time, tensions persist in China-Singapore relations linked to Singapore's relations with Taiwan.

Overall, pragmatism and balance continue to drive Singapore's foreign policy strategy. Ever since its establishment in the 1960s, Singapore has seen ensuring resilience and prosperity as its key priority. Domestically, this has been achieved by supporting social unity and a high standard of living for the citizens. Internationally, productive relations with big and smaller states and regional alliances helped Singapore accomplish this.

¹⁷ Navy gets access to Singapore's Changi naval base, Economic Times, 12.07.2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/navy-gets-access-to-singapores-changi-naval-base/articleshow/61855776.cms>

¹⁸ Blake Herzinger, Friends, Partners, But Not Allies, US Naval Institute, Proceedings, May 2023, <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2023/may/friends-partners-not-allies>

¹⁹ Joint Announcement between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Singapore on the establishment of an All-Round High-Quality Future-Oriented Partnership, Prime Minister Office, 01.04.2023, <https://www.pmo.gov.sg/Newsroom/Joint-Announcement-China-and-Singapore-all-round-high-quality-future-oriented-partnership-Apr-2023>

RESILIENCE AS A KEY PRIORITY

Recently, Singapore has also been focused on securing its own resilience.²⁰ The key problems that may hamper its resilience-building efforts include two major changes: climate change²¹ and demographic challenges.²²

Singapore benefits from its geographical position as it helps it avoid the direct negative impact of natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes. However, Singapore remains vulnerable to climate change. Firstly, it is an island state located low enough to be vulnerable to a 1-meter sea level rise by 2100. Secondly, the average temperature is projected to rise 1.4-4.6°C by 2100. This could lead to the spread of diseases and affect crops in the countries that export food to Singapore. Vulnerability to climate change forces Singapore to design plans for water supply and food crisis prevention as weather conditions are changing. This is especially relevant given that the share of farmland in Singapore has decreased in favour of residential construction, industry and other infrastructure as a result of its industrial development. Meanwhile, food demand will grow further as Singapore's population grows.

Demographically, Singapore is facing the challenge of an ageing population. One risk is that it will have nearly 900,000 citizens aged 65+ by 2030, affecting its economy. As the number of working-age population is expected to shrink, Singapore will have to guarantee a balanced inflow of immigrants and foreign workers and keep increasing productivity to maintain economic dynamics and growth. In this context, Singapore aims to preserve national unity in its diversity.

In this domain, Singapore has noteworthy experience in building interaction among the leaders of its major ethnic and religious communities, and institutions and programs established to this end, including the National Steering Committee on Racial and Religious Harmony,²³ the National Integration Council,²⁴ and Broadening Racial & Religious Interaction through Dialogue & General Education (BRIDGE) program²⁵.

Other threats Singapore's government sees as important include cyber threats, breaches in supply chains and technological/operational challenges. In this context,

²⁰ Singapore Resilience Strategy, Centre for Liveable Cities, Singapore, 2018, https://resilientcitiesnetwork.org/downloadable_resources/Network/Singapore-Resilience-Strategy-English.pdf

²¹ Climate Action Plan, A Climate Resilient Singapore, For a sustainable future, Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources of Singapore, 2016,

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1549Climate_Action_Plan_Publication_Part_2.pdf

²² Yeap, S. Y. National resilience: a demographic snapshot. (RSIS Commentaries, No. 214). RSIS Commentaries. Singapore: Nanyang Technological University. 2014, <https://hdl.handle.net/10356/79366>

²³ National Steering Committee on Racial and Religious Harmony, Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth of Singapore,

<https://www.mccy.gov.sg/sector/initiatives/national-steering-committee-on-racial-and-religious-harmony>

²⁴ National Integration Council, Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth of Singapore,

<https://www.mccy.gov.sg/sector/initiatives/national-integration-council>

²⁵ Broadening Racial & Religious Interaction through Dialogue & General Education Programme, Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth of Singapore, <https://www.mccy.gov.sg/sector/initiatives/bridge>

resilience building has become a key strategic priority both for the government and for the corporate sector. Most companies and organisations realise the importance of investing in cyber resilience, business continuity management, risk monitoring, etc. Almost 90% of respondents in Singapore pointed to “some investment” or “substantial investment” planned for these critical aspects of resilience in the coming years²⁶.

²⁶ Reimagine resilience: Singapore views. Global Crisis and Resilience Survey 2023, PWC, 2023, <https://www.pwc.com/sg/en/publications/assets/page/2023-global-crisis-and-resilience-survey.pdf>

BILATERAL AGENDA

Singapore's Position on the Russian Aggression

Singapore has been condemning the Russian aggression against Ukraine since 2014, but there are more nuances to its stance on this issue. Following Russia's occupation of Crimea in 2014, Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong condemned²⁷ the "unprovoked invasion of a sovereign country" and called for compliance with international law. In 2022, in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, on February 24, the Government of Singapore made an official statement strongly condemning the Russian aggression. Shortly after, on February 28, Singapore imposed the first sanctions against Russia.

Ukraine's and its European partners' diplomatic efforts helped intensify the debate on Singapore's political stance. Even if Singapore has formally taken a pro-Ukrainian side, it remains cautious in its approaches to condemning the Russian aggression and has not been in solidarity with the position of European partners in all aspects. In March 2023, Singapore's Foreign Minister Kasiviswanathan Shanmugam confirmed²⁸ that Singapore continued to condemn Russia's violation of the UN Charter and international law. However, he highlighted that Singapore's stance was not "about being pro- or anti- Russia or pro- or anti- any other country." He stated that the war was the result of Putin's ambitions alone and noted that Ukraine joining NATO was not on NATO's agenda. Apart from that, Kasiviswanathan Shanmugam highlighted that Russia "was not seriously consulted on major issues. And it was not treated with a great deal of respect" by the West. At the same time, he claimed that the US had ignored the issue of Russia's security by violating the principle of "not one inch eastward" (this is a narrative exploited by the Russian propaganda to justify the aggression) when NATO expanded in 1999 and 2004 to include Baltic States that had been part of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact. These statements left an impression that Kasiviswanathan Shanmugam was echoing Russia's "concern" over security architecture. Moreover, he drew comparisons with the Cuban Missile Crisis and the pact between China and the Solomon Islands, using the whataboutism widespread in Russian propaganda where misleading comparisons are used to justify violation of international law. In his statements, Kasiviswanathan Shanmugam concluded that

²⁷ Ukraine crisis a reminder that small countries must defend themselves: PM Lee, Straits Times, 06.03.2014, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/ukraine-crisis-a-reminder-that-small-countries-must-defend-themselves-pm-lee>

²⁸ Closing Keynote Address by Minister for Home Affairs and Law K Shanmugam at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Workshop on The Russia-Ukraine War and Southeast Asia One Year On - Implications and Outlook, Ministry of Law of Singapore, 08.03.2023, <https://www.mlaw.gov.sg/news/speeches/2023-03-08-keynote-address-k-shanmugam-iseas-yusof-ishak-workshop/>

NATO should have dealt with Russia's problems rather than brushing them off even when it expanded. Also, he explained how Russia saw the removal of Viktor Yanukovich (the narrative of a coup in Ukraine) and echoed Russia's doubts about Ukraine's commitment to the Minsk Agreements and the narratives that these agreements were meant to win time for Ukraine.

Singapore's general strategy explains the Minister's stance to some extent. This strategy is based on balancing between the key global actors. This is an attempt to simultaneously comply with Washington's stance while not frustrating Beijing, which is formally neutral but shows an understanding of Russia's rationale for the invasion of Ukraine. In order to better analyse Singapore's further steps, we should look closer at how the fundamentals of its foreign policy are shaped and what are its domestic priorities.

Economic Partnership and Investment

Economic cooperation remains the key sphere for cooperation between Ukraine and Singapore. In recent decades, the Ukraine-Singapore economic relations have been developing in sync with global markets' changes and have fully reflected the trends.

It is hard to overrate the importance of cooperation with Singapore because economic success has helped Singapore emerge as a notable international actor. One of the Asian tigers, Singapore made a quick leap from being a third-world country to one of the world's top economies. Attracting multinational companies with their capital, technology, and management expertise was one of the key elements that shaped Singapore's competitiveness and ensured access to foreign markets. In sum, this allowed Singapore to integrate into the dynamic sectors of the global economy, become a key production centre for semiconductors²⁹, and turn into the most visited seaport in the world.³⁰

In 2007, Ukraine and Singapore launched talks about a Free Trade Agreement but never signed it. Singapore is an open economy that applies zero import duties under the MFN principle to almost 100% of its tariff lines for over 100 countries. As a result, Ukrainian exporters do not have many problems entering the Singapore market. It is a relatively small market, but re-export would help increase trade.

Since Ukraine gained independence, hot-rolled steel has been the top item of Ukraine's exports to Singapore. In 2012, Ukraine exported US \$237mn worth of goods to Singapore – rolled steel accounted for nearly 80% of all exported goods. 2013 was

²⁹ Leo Zhi, Discovering the Impact of Singapore's Semiconductor Industry, DISK, 21.03.2023, <https://www.diskmfr.com/singapores-surprising-role-in-the-semiconductor-industry/>

³⁰ Global Connectivity, Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore, <https://www.mpa.gov.sg/regulations-advisory/maritime-singapore/what-maritime-singapore-offers/global-hub-port>

similar. In 2014-2015, the share of exported hot-rolled steel shrank. By the end of 2015, the share of cast iron in Ukraine's exports to Singapore plummeted from 70-80% to 4.62%.

In 2016-2020, Ukraine gradually increased its total exports but has not yet matched the earlier rates, nor does it have a consistent positive trend. In 2020, Ukraine exported US\$173mn worth of goods to Singapore. In 2021, its exports to Singapore shrank again. According to the Observatory of Economic Complexity,³¹ Ukraine's exports to Singapore were US\$29.9mn, with hot rolled steel, poultry, and oils as the top products. According to Ukraine's State Statistics Bureau, its total trade with Singapore was worth just US \$66.2mn. Over the past 28 years, Ukraine's exports to Singapore shrank compared to US\$36.2mn in 1995. By contrast, exports from Singapore to Ukraine have been growing consistently from US\$23.9mn in 1995 to US\$44.7mn in 2021. The key products Ukraine has been importing from Singapore include cocoa butter, orthopaedic goods and tools for chemical analysis. Overall, mutual interest has been growing over the 1990s and 2010s, and the range and formats of economic cooperation are expanding. Both Ukraine and Singapore have been using the advantages of their potential and discovering opportunities for mutually beneficial partnerships.

Since the 2000s, both countries have been interested in potential investment into each other's economy. Ukraine and Singapore have the Investment Guarantee Agreement³² signed in September 2006. It guarantees the most favoured nation treatment for investment and compensation in the event of enterprise nationalisation.

According to the National Bank of Ukraine, 64.9% of all Singapore investment in Ukraine is in the industry³³. There are 26 companies with Singapore investments in Ukraine, including Food Empire, Sitra Holdings, Manzaro, Flextronics and others.

At the regional level, Ukraine is prepared to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, CPTTP, signed in 2018. Singapore is one of the countries that have ratified it. In spring 2023, a Ukrainian delegation was created to participate in negotiations about Ukraine joining the CPTPP.³⁴ The CPTPP will help attract direct investment, provide Ukrainian manufacturers access to new markets, and abolish non-tariff limitations in trade with countries in the region.

³¹ Ukraine-Singapore, Observatory of Economic Complexity, <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/ukr/partner/sgp>

³² Ukraine and Singapore Sign Investment Guarantee, Ministry of Trade and Industry of Singapore, 18.09.2006, <https://www.mti.gov.sg/Newsroom/Press-Releases/2006/09/Ukraine-and-Singapore-Sign-Investment-Guarantee>

³³ Investments to Ukraine. National Bank of Ukraine, <https://bank.gov.ua/ua/statistic/sector-external#3>

³⁴ Ukraine's delegation to the negotiations on accession to Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership appointed, Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 01.05.2023, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/utvoreno-delehatsiiu-ukrainy-dlia-uchasti-u-perehovorakh-pro-priednannia-d-o-uhody-pro-transtykhookeanske-partnerstvo>

Today, Ukraine views Singapore as a key partner in Southeast Asia and invites Singapore companies to participate in investment projects in agriculture, IT, logistics, energy and other industries. Ukraine-Singapore bilateral economic cooperation continued to develop and reached a new level in many sectors in 2022 in spite of the Russian aggression and all the resulting economic crisis elements, while Ukrainian companies are still strongly interested in the Singapore market.

On August 3, 2022, new opportunities for exports to Singapore opened for Ukrainian producers of pet food thanks to the efforts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the State Service of Ukraine on Food Safety and Consumer Protection. The authorities of both countries approved the respective export sanitary certificate.³⁵ This allowed Ukrainian pet food producers to access Singapore's pet food market, which imports around US\$170mn of goods annually. Food cooperation with Singapore can generate nearly US\$500mn annually³⁶ for Ukrainian producers and farmers, since food, from vegetables and chestnuts to poultry, accounts for a substantial share of Singapore's imports.

It is already possible to speak about the important role of Ukraine-Singapore cooperation through some regions of Ukraine. For example, six steelworks and agricultural companies export their produce to Singapore from the Dnipropetrovsk region and the city of Dnipro. 38 Dnipro-based companies import US\$0.4mn worth of products from Singapore, i.e. 1% of Ukraine's total imports from Singapore.³⁷

On August 17, 2023, Ukraine's Energy Minister met³⁸ with the Minister of Trade and Industry of Singapore at a conference in the US. They focused especially on restoring Ukraine's energy infrastructure and drawing on Singapore's experience in renewable energy sources, and developing an innovative energy industry.

Cultural Exchanges and Humanitarian Contacts

By contrast to the economic component in Singapore-Ukraine relations, their cultural contacts are limited. First and foremost, this is because each country has fairly

³⁵ Singapore opens pet food market for Ukraine, Dnipropetrovsk Investment Agency, 05.08.2022, <https://dia.dp.gov.ua/en/singapore-opens-pet-food-market-for-ukraine/>

³⁶ "Asian Tigers" with Ukraine. Singapore – sanctions against the aggressor, entry point to the ASEAN market, Dnipropetrovsk Investment Agency, 16.02.2023, <https://dia.dp.gov.ua/en/asian-tigers-with-ukraine-singapore-sanctions-against-the-aggressor-entry-point-to-the-asean-market/>

³⁷ "Asian Tigers" with Ukraine. Singapore – sanctions against the aggressor, entry point to the ASEAN market, Dnipropetrovsk Investment Agency, 16.02.2023, <https://dia.dp.gov.ua/en/asian-tigers-with-ukraine-singapore-sanctions-against-the-aggressor-entry-point-to-the-asean-market/>

³⁸ German Galushchenko discusses cooperation in implementing advanced technologies in energy sector with Singapore's Trade Minister Tan See Leng, Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 17.08.2023, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/herman-halushchenko-obhovoryv-z-ministrom-torhivli-sinhapuru-tan-si-lenho-m-spivpratsiu-u-vprovadzheni-novitnikh-tekhnologii-v-enerhetytsi>

small diasporas that could represent their culture and facilitate public diplomacy. At the same time, Ukraine is working on public diplomacy in the region.

In 2019-2021, seven Ukrainian films were presented in Singapore; photo exhibitions War in Ukraine and Ukrainian National Costume were hosted; a fashion show by Ukrainian designer Oksana Polonets took place, and an event with Ukrainian food from Ukrainian chef Yuriy Kovryzhenko was organised. In 2014, the Ukrainian Club in Singapore³⁹ was founded to facilitate contacts among representatives of the Ukrainian community that resides in Singapore.

In 2022, the Peace of Art⁴⁰ project organised a Ukrainian Affair event in Singapore jointly with the Singapore Red Cross. The event focused on Ukrainian culture, as well as Ukrainian IT, presented by the European Association of Software Engineering.

³⁹ Ukrainian Club in Singapore, <https://www.facebook.com/UkrainianClubInSingapore/>

⁴⁰ Ease Association Represents Ukraine's It Industry at A Ukrainian Affair in Singapore, European Association of Software Engineering, 08.06.2022, <https://it-ease.com/en/novini-ease/ease-association-represents-ukraine-s-it-industry-at-a-ukrainian-affair-in-singapore/>

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is obvious that high- and top-level contacts between Ukraine and Singapore have been too few to proactively develop beneficial bilateral cooperation in the 30 years of Ukraine's independence. This gap results from the lack of mutual visits with representatives of parliaments and businesses – and because there were too few meetings between the governmental representatives. Apart from that, Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Culture were not engaged enough in promoting public and cultural diplomacy that would allow Ukraine to expand its soft power.

In this aspect, Russian diplomacy in Singapore is noteworthy. Russian officials visit Singapore often, and Russian diplomacy is far more intense than Ukrainian diplomacy there. Analysis of this aspect would allow Ukraine to resist Russian narratives and the influence of pro-Russian elements more efficiently. At the same time, given Singapore's weight in the region and its economic and innovation potential, Ukraine should deepen and expand dialogue with it. Given the interests of Singapore, its priorities in global and international security, and the respective national strategies and policies, it is worth focusing on the following potential priorities in cooperation.

For now, avoiding increasing pressure on Singapore to demonstrate support for Ukraine seems reasonable. Instead, Ukraine can focus on the themes where the political component is less notable and can positively impact Ukraine's economic capacity, thus indirectly contributing to its defence capabilities. Also, Ukraine can focus on the themes which Singapore defines as its key challenges.

In the context of Singapore's security priorities, **Ukraine can advocate for it to join the implementation of some points of Ukraine's Peace Formula**, including the point on **food security**. Russia's war against Ukraine has a negative impact on food security across the world, while Ukraine exports agricultural products to Singapore. **Environmental security** – primarily **river, lake and sea cleaning** – is another element of the Peace Formula that could be interesting for Singapore given its global leadership in water management⁴¹.

Additionally, Singapore can be invited to join the **restoration and reconstruction of Ukraine, including its transition to green economy**. Ukraine could explore Singapore's readiness to share its know-how in establishing a united water resources management company. In this, Singapore could join efforts with South Korea, which has already pledged support in restoring Ukraine's water resources through K-water, Korea Water Resources Corporation.

⁴¹ Singapore water management, World Wide Fund for Nature, 1.03.2012, https://wwf.panda.org/wwf_news/?204587/Singapore-water-management

In the context of Ukraine's future post-war reconstruction and with the special status of Dnipropetrovsk region in trade relations with Singapore, it makes sense to **offer Singapore to partner up with Dnipropetrovsk region and hold trilateral consultations on this with Ukraine, Singapore, and Czech Republic** (the latter is already engaged in restoring Dnipropetrovsk region).

In the future, **Singapore's experience of migrant integration may be noteworthy** as Ukraine will probably have to engage the migrant workforce in its post-war reconstruction.

Finally, both countries can find the **exchange of knowledge and expertise in building national resilience** helpful. Among other things, Singapore may be interested in Ukraine's experience of information and cyber security, and security and protection of seaports from blockade and attacks – with sea drones, among others. **Hosting bilateral and multilateral fora** on these issues could be another point of interest for the two countries.

Apart from that, Ukraine should view Singapore as a possible facilitator in establishing an efficient format of **interaction with ASEAN**. As Ukraine's diplomacy and members of parliament have intensified cooperation with ASEAN, Ukraine needs guides and friends that could help it intensify this multilateral dialogue.

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